November 2019

Hiplife Music in Ghana: Postcolonial Performances of Modernity

Nii Kotei Nikoi

HIPLIFE MUSIC IN GHANA: POSTCOLONIAL PERFORMANCES OF MODERNITY

A Dissertation Presented

By

NII KOTEI NIKOI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2019

Department of Communication

HIPLIFE MUSIC IN GHANA: POSTCOLONIAL PERFORMANCES OF MODERNITY

A Dissertation Presented

By

NII KOTEI NIKOI

Approved as to style and content by:

_____

Sut Jhally, Chair

_____

Emily West, Member

_____

Lisa Henderson, Member

_____

Olabode Omojola, Member

_____

Sut Jhally, Department Head

Department of Communication

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The pages of this dissertation reflect the efforts of a community. They capture many engagements with a generous and nurturing network of support. I am thankful for the many people who believed in me and shared their precious time with me.

I deeply indebted to the artists, fans and many cultural producers who interacted with me during my research work. Thank you for your generosity and allowing me into your world. I want to thank the folks at Brazil house for allowing me to participate in Chale Wote and the YoyoTinz crew for connecting me with various artists. I am especially grateful to Moshood Balogun for his friendship, thoughtfulness and kindness.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Sut Jhally, a generous mentor who consistently embodies the political effectivity of intellectual work to make the world better. I am grateful for his constant reminders to be attentive to the political stakes of my work.

To my committee members: Emily West, I am very grateful for your feedback and your willingness to engage me every time I stopped by your office; Lisa Henderson, I very grateful for the kindness with which you pushed me to be a better and more engaged scholar; and Olabode Omojola, I am thankful for your patience and the invaluable insights you shared with me about music making.

I also want to say thank you to my professors for actively engaging my ideas and interests: Mari Castañeda, Kevin Anderson, Leda Cooks, Seyram Avle, Anne Ciecko, Claudio Moreira, Kimberlee Pérez, Gonen Dori-Hacohen, Shawn Shimpach, and Erica Scharrer. I am also grateful for the staff of the Department of Communication; you have

all been patient and generous while assisting me to navigate this doctoral journey. Thank you, Kathleen Ready, Susan Dreyer, Omadelle A. Nelson Bowser, Donna Berg, Guy-Marius Kpodjedo and Ruben Garcia. Many thanks to my department colleagues who have consistently showed up to support me: Katty Alhayek, Mike Alvarez, Felicitas Baruch, Sarah Cho, Matt Ross, Carmen Hernández-Ojeda, James Earl Owens, Porntip Israsena Twishime, and Siyuan Yin.

To my awesome network of kind and supportive friends; thank you so much for always being here, standing by me and encouraging me. To all the members the African Graduate Students Association: Nyaradzai Changamire-Hokonya, James Hokonya, Korka Sall, Jean-Philippe Sasore and Leah Ndanga. Thank you Ruthfirst Ayande for copyediting sections of my dissertation. A special thank you to Ximena Abello Hurtado for your companionship and constant challenges to my thinking that have shaped many of the ideas in this project.

I want to thank my family for their unfailing support throughout this process, especially my dad, Gottfried Nikoi (Mr. Nikoi) who has been calling me from Ghana every Sunday since I arrived in the U.S. in 2012 for my graduate studies. To my mum, Adjorkor Sowah, thank you for constantly praying for my safety and success. I am thankful to my sisters for their unwavering faith in me: Rita Naadu Nikoi, Nicholina 'Baby' Nikoi and Millicent Naadu Lartey. To my nieces and nephews, you continue to bring so much joy to my life and remind me of why what I do is important: Jacob and Naa Quashie; Edem, Giana, and Eyram Adzakey; and Jason and Amadea Antwi. I am extremely grateful to my aunt, Patience 'Auntie Pat' Berko, you have been my number one rock here in the U.S. supporting me both financially and emotionally.

ABSTRACT

HIPLIFE MUSIC IN GHANA: POSTCOLONIAL PERFORMANCES OF MODERNITY

SEPTEMBER 2019

NII KOTEI NIKOI, B.A. PUBLISHING STUDIES, KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

OHIO UNIVERSITY, M.A. COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Sut Jhally

This research project examines the operation of development discourse in popular culture, how it is reproduced, contested and how alternatives are imagined. It is a post-development study of the production and consumption of Ghanaian hiplife music videos and culture. It explores how hiplife makers challenge development discourse and advance alternative ideas of social transformation. Considering the enduring (and damaging) legacies of colonialism, hiplife as a site of relative freedom of expression is fertile for the potential production of a decolonial vocabulary to heal colonial wounds— undoing colonial sensibilities imposed on the colonized.

The project reveals that mainstream male hiplife stars serve as referents for how to successfully inhabit a postcolonial space. Constructing an entrepreneurial branded self through their performance of success, they circulate ideas about what it means to live a "modern" life. However, other artists turn to what I call hiphop praxes, as tools to cultivate new identities. These artists consciously claim their Ghanaianess—and hence blackness— by adopting new performance names; using their own language and accents; and reconfiguring their presentation of self. Channeling these elements through their

performance personae they essentially become new beings, reflecting a shift in their consciousness about themselves and their society.

The study also explores what the movement towards development has meant for constructions of modern Ghanaian femininity. I argue that the image of the jezebel – women who use their sexuality to exploit men – has become one of the mainstays of hiplife music and its representation of modern womanhood. In hiplife the jezebel image positions women as threats to male success. The study further explores how the representation of women in hiplife reveals both gender dynamics and the ongoing nature of racial formation in Ghana. The articulation of race and gender shapes labor dynamics within the music video industry. I examine how, in the context of racialized beauty ideals, lighter skin increases women's chances of securing employment as performers in the music video industry.

This study contributes to work on popular culture in Africa and to audiovisual studies in several ways. First, it emphasizes that developmentalism, which advances industrial countries in North America and Europe as models of development in the Global South, has become an integral facet of how social transformation is imagined by the state and its people. Second, it argues that hiplife videos, to date understudied, are forms for understanding artists' self-representation and the construction of their performative identities. Third, it transcends textual approaches to music video studies and concentrates on the production set. The set is regarded as a social event in which many constituencies come together under specific circumstances to create art and exchange knowledge through practice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

CHAPTER 1

POSTCOLONIAL PERFORMANCES OF HIPLFE

Introduction

In the opening scene of "Heritage Africa," Kwaw Ansah's (1989) celebrated historical film about the lead up to Ghanaian independence, the camera zooms to a sign that says, "European Quarters Native Loiterers Prohibited by Order." The next shot reveals young boys peering through bushes to see if anybody is surveilling the area. One by one, the boys emerge out of the bushes and dash across grass towards the object of their perilous quest to break the colonial command of spatial segregation in Accra. Their quest is to pluck ripe mangoes from the trees in the European garden. As they begin plucking the mangoes, they are spotted by a native 'garden boy' who exclaims 'hey, make you stop, make you stop...thief thief.' The young boys start running but they are apprehended by the native forces, who begin slapping and hitting them with batons. The boys scream and beg for mercy as they are dragged away. As the scene fades we hear a choir singing to usher in the next scene which takes place in church. What begins with images of repressive European order and ends with Christian religion.

The colonial spatial segregation policies in Accra present an opportunity to understand how the British attempted to create a "piece of England grafted into the townscape of Accra" (MacDonald 1892, 199-200 cited in Pierre, 2012 p.27). It also reveals how 'natives' were actively excluded from the places perceived as modern, civilized. As Pierre (2012) notes, these discriminatory spatial plans and segregation were excused through the discourse of sanitation, health and hygiene. Here, I want to suggest that spatial segregation symbolically and physically prevented Africans, natives, from

participating in what could be considered the "developed." The mango, the object of desire for the young boys becomes a metaphor for the desire for the promises of development, always a moving target, always unattainable. Yet, the ripe mango is always in plain view, they can see it but it cannot be attained.

The term 'development' has become one of the main concepts used to understand the project of social transformation in many postcolonial African countries. For many years it was widely accepted that advanced industrial countries in North America and Europe were "indubitable models" for countries in the, so-called, Global South to emulate— what Enrique Dussel calls the developmentalist fallacy (Escobar, 2011, p.vii). Development was regarded as the "magic formula" to lift countries out of their perceived backwardness. This notion, originating in colonialism, is partly derived from the modernization theory which argues that undeveloped nations would become modern when they embraced "industrial economics, scientific technology, liberal democratic politics, nuclear families and secular world views" (Ferguson, 2006, p.177). Presently, this Euro-American idea of modernity meant that "postcolonial nations were condemned to live in the 'not yet' shadow land of other societies' already realized history" (Ferguson, 2006, p.178). More importantly, as this idea of modernity has been widely accepted, it has fostered certain subjectivities; people have come to see themselves as developed or underdeveloped (Escobar, 2011; Sachs, 1997). In fact, this "imaginary of development" anchored in the notion of Euro-American modernity remains one of the fundamental principles governing "thinking and practices" of everyday people in Africa, and more specifically, Ghana (Geschire et al., 2008, p.1). However, peoples in Africa did not always consider themselves within the framework of 'development' (Escobar, 1995).

Indeed, post-development scholars claim that this framework is as recent as the early post-World War II period. How, then, did they come to see themselves as underdeveloped and, more importantly, why has the discourse of development remained a central idea of what social change means in Ghanaian society? And, perhaps, more importantly, how is this hegemonic discourse challenged and what alternatives are proffered?

To this end, this research project examines the operation of development discourse in popular culture, how it is reproduced, contested and alternatives imagined. Popular culture is not only a potent economic force but also a "powerful force of education and socialization, and as one of the primary ways in which people make sense of themselves, their lives and the world" (Grossberg 1992, p.69). It is an important site to examine the articulation of culture and power since it is one of the grounds on which "the struggle for and against the culture of the powerful is engaged" (Hall, 1998, p.453). As Hall (1998) has argued, popular culture "is the arena of consent and resistance" where hegemony partly arises (p.453).

Today, one of the areas where these development discourses are most evident is Ghanaian hiplife music. Hiplife music is the indigenization of U.S. hiphop in Ghana. It is arguably one of the most popular musical genres—since 2000, a hiplife song has won the "Most Popular Song of Year" nine times at the prestigious annual Ghana Music Awards. This male-dominated genre and "its outspoken lyrics, electronic instrumentation, solo artists," and music videos have become a symbol of identity for the present generation of Ghanaians (J. Collins, 2005, pp.30-31). Additionally, hiplife has also become a source of "personal and collective youth agency" or what Shipley (2012) calls "performative

agency" (Osumare, 2012). Indeed, it has also become a site where the dream of a good life is reinscribed (Osumare, 2013). Manthia Diawara (2009) contends that the global popularity of commercial hiphop is an index of the desire of poor people to live the good life. In this way, hiplife artists have come to represent how to successfully inhabit a postcolonial space. For instance, Shipley (2012) argues that hiplife artists are public symbols of successful self-entrepreneurialism. As such, they have become one of the frames through which Ghanaian youths, particularly young men, come to understand modernity.

This is a qualitative research project that examines the cultural production of hiplife music videos. It examines the aesthetics of success, such as the display of material wealth and access to urbanized spaces or economically advanced countries, as an index of the desire to live the good life, a modern life. A product of both globalization and localization, hiplife and its stars often depend on visual forms of self-representation such as dress, photography, and importantly, music videos to construct their performative identities (Oduro-Frimpong, 2009; Shipley, 2012). This is because these artists recognize that their success is anchored in their ability to create an image or performance of success (Shipley, 2012). Nevertheless, music videos, one of the most powerful vehicles for self-performance, have been under-examined in the literature on hiplife.

Hiplife artists' performances, or what Waterman (2002) describes as "performative projection[s] of self" can be viewed as "publicly articulated models of subjectivity, multidimensional images of what it is to be a person, to inhabit the world in a certain way under particular social and historical circumstances" (p.22). For Frith (1996), concern for the aesthetic of popular music is not necessarily a matter of whether

the music or performance “reflects the people, but how it produces them” (p.109). Frith’s argument is based on the claims that identity is not an “accomplished fact” but is always a process of becoming, and experiences of music, whether making or consuming, can be considered as “an experience of this self-in-process” (Frith, 1996, p.109). If Frith is right then the clearest example is Shipley’s (2012) observation that hiplife artists’ performance of success are attempts at self-cultivating success.

In doing this study, I also explore how living in a space defined by underdevelopment is embodied and performed (Escobar, 2011). Thus, this research project unpacks the practices of cultural producers of hiplife music videos and culture as they negotiate a terrain configured as underdeveloped. Further, I examine the extent to which these practices undermine the dominant ideas of Euro-American development discourse and offer alternative ideas of social transformation. Indeed, I recognize, as Hall (2003) has argued, that an intervention in media constructions is also an "intervention in the ideological terrain of struggle” (p.18).

Additionally, I explore how audiences engage with hiplife music videos. How do they understand video messages in relation to their lived experience in postcolonial Ghana? Indeed, since I am concerned with the ideological and political operation of popular cultural forms, I must also attend to how audiences understand these forms (Lewis, 1991). Engaging the audience provides a means of collecting the common cultural meanings associated with music videos (Lewis, 1991). As I have pointed out, the society has become preoccupied with emerging out of their apparent state of underdevelopment into the promise land of the developed. However, I hasten to add that Ghana, like many so-called developing nations, faces real challenges with poverty,

unemployment, economic stagnation and so on. As such, my challenge to development discourse conceptualizations of Ghana as underdeveloped is in no way meant to diminish the real challenges facing the country. However, to desire to live in a developed society, means first accepting your condition as underdeveloped (Esteva, 2012). For instance, hiplife artists' performance of success not only projects aspirations but also appears to counter stereotypical narratives about Africa and its people. In that sense, development discourse becomes a framework that shapes how people see themselves (read: underdeveloped) and also influences their aspirations (read: to be developed).

In this project, I also examine ideas about 'modern' Ghanaian women in hiplife music. Specifically, what the movement towards attaining development has meant for constructions of modern Ghanaian femininity. For instance, feminine beauty rituals of the "modern African lady" have been regarded as a threat to "African moral fabric" (Hansen, 2004). Women, as a social group, come to embody ideas about the status of morality in the community, family and nation (Dosekun, 2016). For instance, the patriarchal anxieties expressed in the narratives about 'city women' and 'rural women' can be described as metaphors for modern and traditional womanhood. Indeed, African feminists have pointed out, women's bodies are viewed as barometers of so-called "African morality" (Lutwama-Rukundo, 2016). I also explore how women's participation in this male dominated music video production is enabled and constrained. Hiplife often writes women out of modern Ghanaian history through its disproportionate focus on men as the drivers of history.

In addition, I study the articulation of gender and race within my examination of developmentalist discourses in hiplife music videos. I look at how the representation of

women reveals both gender dynamics and the ongoing nature of racial formation in Ghana. Ogundipe (1984) has suggested that colonialization exaggerated existing indigenous ideas of male superiority and introduced new ones. Quijano (2007) has also argued that when new regions and populations were colonized, peoples were racially classified in a hierarchical manner whereby colonized (people of color) were regarded as inferior while the colonizer (white) saw themselves as superior. To this end, Pierre (2012) has argued that light skin valorization in Ghana is an important site of racial formation which grants privilege to white and light skin color. Indeed, in Blay's (2010) study on skin bleaching (or whitening) in Ghana, the author explains that for women lighter skin served as social capital that consequently impacted their quality of life. For instance, it increased their chances of securing employment through the social networks they were able to access. Her participants associated light skin with European ancestry, "cleanliness, beauty, attractiveness, femininity and modernity" (Blay, 2010, p.441). In this way, it appears that proximity to white skin literally reinscribes notions of the 'superiority' of Euro-American modernity: light-skinned becomes synonymous with beauty and power (Blay, 2010).

As noted, hiplife remains a male-dominated space and invariably the stories emerging from hiplife are essentially the experiences of men living in a postcolonial society. Ghanaian women in hiplife music are often depicted as the objects of heterosexual male desire whose appearance highlights male success (Shipley, 2012 p.169). Conversely, there are also several songs that portray women as threats to male success. In these songs, young men are warned to stay away from these sexually promiscuous women who are only interested in their money. As such, women are

depicted as "'fickle minded, unfaithful, money lovers, exploitative, competitive, gossips, submissive, jealous, etc.'" (Osumare, 2012, p.76). Therefore, the study will also explore the constructions of modern Ghanaian women in hiplife music videos.

To examine the issues discussed above I draw on critical cultural studies, decolonial studies and post-development scholarship. This project contributes and is informed by critical cultural studies towards a decolonial turn or what Catherine Walsh (2007) calls "cultural studies of decolonial orientation" (p.225), that is, the production of knowledge grounded in "histories and lived experiences of coloniality" (Walsh, 2007 p.234). Such an approach is an act of "shifting the geopolitics of critical knowledge." As Anibal Quijano (2007) originally advanced, coloniality remains the primary mechanism of domination after colonialism ended. It ensures that power relations established during colonialism are reproduced for the benefit of Western Europe and North America. Within this view, modernity is regarded as masking the reproduction of coloniality— "hidden process of expropriation, exploitation, pollution, and corruption" (Vasquez and Mignolo, 2013). In other words, coloniality is constitutive of modernity; modernity would not exist without coloniality. The focus on coloniality enables us to understand that "colonialism, imperialism, racism, and sexism" are not unflattering "by-products of modern Europe, but…part of the conditions that made the modern West possible" (Lander 2000, p.525 cited in Walsh, 2007, p.228). As well, post-development literature enables us to examine the development apparatus as a discourse that has become extremely efficient at "producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over the Third World" (Escobar, 2011, p.9). In the name of control, regions and populations are defined as underdeveloped and developed.

Conceptual Framework

Decoloniality: Modernity/Coloniality

The concept of modernity, what Trouillot (2002) calls a North Atlantic universal, is not merely "descriptive or referential," it projects visions of what the world should look like (p.220). Even though it comes burdened with connotations that pertain to particular historical, social and cultural contexts, it is adept at effacing its localization. The term arrives imbued with "cultural assumptions that range from what it means to be a human being, to the proper relationship between humans and the natural world; and ideological choices that range from the nature of the political to its possibilities of transformation" (p.220).

Escobar (2004) provides a succinct summary as a member of a group of Latin American scholars examining the notion of modernity through the lens of coloniality. First, they locate the origins of modernity in the conquest of the Americas and "the control of the Atlantic after 1491, rather than in most commonly accepted landmarks such as the Enlightenment or the end of the 18th century" (p.217). Second, they draw attention to colonialism, postcolonialism and imperialism as central aspects of modernity. Third, they propose that a world perspective be used to explain modernity rather than regarding it as a purely European process. Fourth, they call attention to the domination and exploitation (physical, economic, social and psychological) of non-European people and locations as an integral component of modernity. Fifth, they argue that "a conception of eurocentrism as the knowledge form of modernity/ coloniality—a hegemonic representation and mode of knowing that claims universality for itself, derived from Europe's position as center" (p.217).

Within this framework, modernity's discourses and practices mask the "reproduction of coloniality" (Mignolo, 2011), which is distinct from colonialism. Colonialism, a visible face of coloniality, refers to the "political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire" (Maldonado-Toress, 2007, p.243). As noted coloniality "is still the most general form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed" (Quijano, 2007, p.170). It continues to "define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.243). Thus, in Ghana, British coloniality lives in various institutions such as the family, church, education, and governance, and continues to shape peoples' aspiration and how they see themselves. Coloniality is also evident in what Jemima Pierre (2012) describes as 'racial projects,' such as skin bleaching, which are symptomatic of racial ideologies that valorize whiteness in postcolonial societies. "These racial projects," she notes, "are the building blocks of racial formation" in Ghana (p.5). Indeed, they are shaped by "global racial configurations of identity, culture, economics, and politics" in postcolonial Ghana (Pierre, 2012, p.1).

Coloniality is undergirded by two axes of power: the social classification of peoples within the framework of race and the "new structure of control of labor and its resources and products" (Quijano 2007, p.534). Historically, and contemporaneously, racial classification is organized hierarchally, thus the colonized were regarded as inferior while the colonizer saw themselves as superior. This racial framework produced "new social identities…: 'whites', 'Indians, 'Negroes', 'yellows', 'olives'" based on "physiognomic traits of the peoples as external manifestations of their 'racial' nature"

(Quijano 2007, p.171). Based on this, “new geocultural identities” emerged such as African, European, Asian and later Oceanic (Quijano 2007, p.171). To be sure, European colonial ethnocentrism and the racialized codification of peoples of the world reveal how Europeans came to see themselves as “naturally superior” to non-Europeans (Quijano 2000, p.541). Additionally, the division of labor was racialized. For instance, in the Hispanic region, Indians would be confined to serfdom and blacks to slavery while the dominant white Spanish and Portuguese earned wages. This racial distribution of labor was later expanded worldwide by colonizers from the 18th century forwards (Quijano 2000, p.537). This is because as other regions and populations were incorporated into this new model of power, they underwent a process of “historical reidentification” (p.540). What is important to note, as Maldonado (2007) argues, is that this new model of power also became the basis of modern identity.

Additionally, new “intersubjective relations of domination” were inaugurated within this new model of power, “between Europe and the Europeans and the rest of the regions and the peoples of the world” (Quijano, 2000, p.540- p.541). Quijano (2000) describes three processes that characterized these new intersubjective relations: the expropriation of colonized practices useful for European capitalist development; epistemic suppression of colonized knowledge; and the imposition of European colonial epistemology. Further, as colonized peoples were mapped onto the European temporal perspective of history, they were placed in the European past. Thus the colonized, non-European ‘inferior’ races, and their culture and histories, were sent to the back of the civilization queue, while European culture and history occupied the front.

Within this logic, modernity and rationality were regarded as "exclusively European products and experiences" (Quijano, 2000, p.542). Eurocentrism as a "hegemonic perspective of knowledge" was undergirded by two foundational myths: first, human civilization is observed as the departure from the "state of nature and culminated in Europe;" second, the differences between Europe and non-Europeans was seen as natural (racial) and not the result of the history of domination (Quijano, 2000, p.542). For Quijano, what is striking about the Eurocentric perspective of history is how Europeans were able to spread and establish this logic as "hegemonic within the new intersubjective universe of the global model of power" (p.542).

Within the modernity/coloniality framework several ideas have been advanced. As observed, colonial relations of power governed knowledge, sexuality, the economy and fundamental ideas about being. The coloniality of being was advanced to examine the "lived experience of coloniality" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p.242). Maria Lugones (2007) also introduced the "colonial/modern gender system," as way to understand how gender converges with race within processes of colonial power (p.186). Colonialism imposed a new gender system that produced "different arrangements for colonized males and females than for whites" (Lugones, 2007, p.286). For instance, colonized women were initially not ascribed a gender, and even when they were perceived as female, they were not accorded the features of femininity that were associated with white European women. She contends that this colonial/modern gender system is made possible precisely because this coloniality of power is built upon the racial classification of people.

The idea of decolonial aestheSis also emerges from modernity/(de)coloniality discussion. The point of the spelling of aestheSis (sensibility) and aestheTics (theory of

beauty), instead of aesthesis and aesthetics, is to distinguish their original use as parts of a European normative framework invented during enlightenment. AestheTics is regarded as a "philosophical discourse" that emerges in eighteenth-century Europe to regulate taste within and outside Europe (Vasquez & Mignolo, 2013, p.10). Further, "aestheTics as normativity also has served to reproduce the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality: the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of beings" (p.10-11). Indeed, aestheTics is implicated in the new model of power because the modern/colonial project also governed the "the senses and perception." For instance, Radano and Olaniyan (2016) argue that through music we can understand the "empire as an audible formation, whose very audibility draws the listener (and even the hearer) into a vast network of language, supra-linguistic sensory fields, regimes of knowledge, and new modes of subjectivity"—the "audibility of empire" (p.13). Further, modern aestheTics is implicated in canonizing particular cultural activities while rejecting and damning others, particularly "other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving" (p.5). It has been utilized "as a mechanism to produce and regulate sensibilities." Thus, Vasquez and Mignolo (2013) state:

> Decolonial aestheSis is an option that delivers a radical critique to modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics and, simultaneously, contributes to making visible decolonial subjectivities at the confluence of popular practices of re-existence, artistic installations, theatrical and musical performances, literature and poetry, sculpture and other visual arts(p.5).

A decolonial aestheSis generally refers "to any and every thinking and doing that is geared toward undoing a particular kind of aesthesis, of senses, that is the sensibility of the colonized subject" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, p.201). As such, for Vasquez and Mignolo (2013), decolonial aestheSis remains one site where "decoloniality is thriving"

(p.15), that is, where cultural production is committed to the decolonial option. For decoloniality makes visible colonial wounds underneath the "rhetoric of modernity" and the "rhetoric of salvation," underneath racialization via "the logic of the disposability of human life in the name of civilization and progress" (Vasquez & Mignolo, 2013, p.15). Importantly, decolonial aestheSis moves towards the healing of colonial wounds. To this end, decolonial artists are primarily interested in creating art "to decolonize sensibilities, to transform colonial aestheTics into decolonial aestheSis" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, p. 201). To be sure, the experience of coloniality engendered a sensibility that constructed non-Europeans as 'deficient' humans; decolonial aestheSis seeks to dismantle this sensibility.

In this way, decolonial aestheSis is involved in what Gibson-Graham (2006), drawing on William Connolly (1996), call a politics of becoming— opening the possibility for the creation of new subjects. First, drawing on Foucault, Gibson-Graham note that "the concept of subjection allows us to see subjects as a 'made' and as 'making themselves' in and through discourse and practices of governmentality" (p.23). Governmentality does not only oppress and limit but can also be "productive and enabling" (p.23). Following Butler, they recognize that "subjection [is] an active process that is always ongoing and never completely successful" (p.24). Further, they argue that the "experience of subjection" is the very site for engendering a politics of becoming (p.25). Gibson-Graham's (2006) concern is "how subjects 'become,'" how can they transform and "create new identities for themselves despite the seemingly hegemonic power of dominant discourses and governmental practices" (p.24). For my part, the

politics of becoming enables us to consider how the lived experience of coloniality can become the very grounds for the creation of decolonialized identities.

Additionally, it is here, the practice of decolonial aestheSis, that I locate what Gibson-Graham (2006) also refer to as the "politics of possibilities." As they originally advanced, a politics of possibilities makes legible other forms non-capitalist economies or the performance of "new economic worlds" (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p.614). It involves a "practice of seeing and speaking differently" which helps us to see obscured and alternative economies. Their approach provides useful tools for "doing thinking" which positions us as ethical subjects of economic possibility. Doing thinking consists of three techniques: ontological reframing (produces the ground for possibility), rereading (reading for difference) and creativity (produces possibilities). For instance, ontological reframing releases us, epistemologically, from taken for granted structures to consider the unexpected. In this project, it would also require consideration for the performative effect of modernity/coloniality in order for possibilities to be recognized in the here and now. Gibson-Graham (2008) remind us that the "representation of structural impossibility can always give way to an ethical project of possibility, if we can recognize the political and ethical choices to be made" (p.622). Politics of possibilities ensures that I make the ethical decision to pay attention to decolonial aestheSis as way to highlight the construction of other worlds. To be sure, decolonial aestheSis is precisely interested in recognizing and opening options for "liberating the senses,"[1] that is, making visible possibilities for decolonizing senses. Indeed, in the world making of decolonial artists

[1] See "Decolonial Aesthetics (I)." Retrieved from https://transnationaldecolonialinstitute.wordpress.com/decolonial-aesthetics/

'success' is largely defined by the contributions "to build decolonial sensibilities, decolonial subjects or, still, help colonial subjects to re-emerge, re-surge, and re-exist" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, p.205).

Post-Development

Coloniality exposes modernity's underside and rejects the notion that European countries are universal models for development. Indeed, the discourse of modernity operates via the "imposition of 'salvation', whether as Christianity, civilization, modernization and development after WWII or market democracy after the fall of the Soviet Union" (Mignolo, 2007, p.463). It is unsurprising that development discourse originates from colonialism and European modernity but has been appropriated as projects for nation building in postcolonial societies in Africa (Escobar 2011; Sachs, 1997). During colonialism "development meant the refashioning of and transformation of African society according to the needs, demands and imperatives of colonial regimes" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p.86). In fact, now the development apparatus, according to Rahnema (1997) "helped a dying and obsolete colonialism to transform itself into an aggressive – even sometimes an attractive— instrument able to recapture lost ground" (p.379). For Kothari (2005), the "colonial genealogy of development" is integral to understanding the historical continuities in the theory and practice of development" (p.85).

Post-development scholars reveal the "epoch-specific nature of key concepts," such as poverty, equity, and production that undergird the notion of development. They locate the inauguration of development with President Harry Truman's speech in 1949, where Truman deploys the concept of underdevelopment. His use of 'underdevelopment'

(which was certainly not new) transformed development into a symbolic euphemism that inadvertently represented the hegemony of the United States (Esteva, 1997). Since then, according to Escobar (1995), development has become an "instrument of economic control over the physical and social reality of much of Asia, Africa and Latin America" (p.22). He argues that it has become an important instrument that has not only been used to produce these worlds but also how they have produced themselves, as a result, constricting or obstructing the imagining of other worlds. The deployment of the development apparatus meant that numerous countries began to see themselves as underdeveloped and embarked on the process of "un-underdeveloping" themselves. Thus, they subjected their nations and people to all manner of political and economic intervention.

The discovery of poverty in Asia, Africa and Latin America was central to the reconfiguration of global culture and political economy (Escobar, 2011, p.21). Poor countries came to be defined in relation to wealth standards in more industrialized countries. Initially development was reduced to economic growth; it described the "growth in the income per person in economically underdeveloped areas" (Esteva, 1997, p.8). In 1948, the World Bank qualified countries with a per capita annual income below $100 as poor; the moment this measuring device was deployed two-thirds of the world were instantly rendered poor. Hence, these countries, the "heterogeneous global majority," were sent to the back of the development queue (Esteva, 2012). This heralded a shift in the conception and management of poverty with the only solution being development via economic growth.

To this end, nations come to desire a better future under the framework of "development-as-growth" (Sachs, 1997). To be sure, this development perspective implies both a "chronopolitics and a geopolitics" (p.x). Chronopolitics describes how the global population is placed on a unitary plane emulating the so-called "pacemakers who are supposed to represent the forefront of social evolution" (p.x). In other words, regions and populations around the world are said to be moving in a singular direction towards Euro-American modernity. Geopolitics refers to the hierarchical structuring of global regions and populations where GDP-rich countries occupy the top positions. This is dangerous as it places the "Euro-Atlantic model of civilization" at the forefront of history and global social hierarchy (Sachs, 1997, p.xi). These insights have led post-development scholars (Esteva,1997; Escobar, 2011) to call for an end to the notion "development" because it is deeply implicated in Euro-American hegemony. Writing in 1989, Sachs argued that "[t]he idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape" (p.xv); development simply "did not work," it had "grown obsolete." He contends that we must break away from commonsense "colonial perceptions and the legacy of Western rationalism" (p.xii). To this end the post-development era should entail, in part, separating the aspiration of "equity from economic growth" and connecting it to "community- and culture-based notions of well-being" (p.xii).

However, Pieterse (2000) and other critics argue that the post-development scholars' rejection of the concept of development is untenable. For him, post-development scholars advance development as a stand-in for modernity, and "offer no politics besides the self-organizing capacity of the poor, which actually lets the development responsibility of states and international institutions off the hook" (p.187).

Instead, he maintains, one can share their insights and not necessarily decide to do away entirely with the concept of development. Ultimately for Pieterse (2000) the concept of development is fundamentally about "changing the world;" it is way to think about societal progress. For my part, I believe the notion of development is deeply implicated in the continuation of coloniality and this is what post-development scholars seek to reveal as a foundation for "alternatives to development" (Escobar, 1995, p.22). For instance, Escobar (1995) believes that an examination into social movements can yield insight into how transatlantic universals, such as 'progress,' are being displaced and redefined.

In another critique of post-development theory, Mathews (2017) argues that it does not sufficiently explain why there continues to be a desire for development amongst many in Africa. As she observes, post-development scholars contend that development discourse colonizes the "minds, hearts and imaginations" of peoples living in underdevelopment (p.2654). Other criticisms Escobar (2007) identifies are: (a) the concentration on discourse has neglected the actual conditions of impoverishment and global capitalism; (b) the generalization of development overlooked heterogenous development approaches and institutions, as well as the challenges to development in the situated locations; and (c) lastly, the romanticizatoin of tradition and social movements while ignoring the relations of power within those spaces. Notwithstanding, as Ziai (2007) observes, two of the important critiques advanced by post-development scholars are not really contested. They include the argument that the conventional notion of development is profoundly Eurocentric, and it has also "authoritarian and technocratic implications" (p.9).

Drawing on Foucault's concept of governmentality, scholars in international development, especially critical anthropology of development, advance the idea of 'developmentality' to examine how power operates within the spaces of international aid (Lie, 2015 725; Mawuko-Yevugah 2010). Within Lie's (2015) formulation, developmentality is understood as a "productive power contingent on influencing the actions of others who are then made responsible for governing and developing themselves" (p.726). His formulation of developmentality stems from the examination of donor-recipient relationships. Lie examines how a new aid architecture advances the idea of "partnership, participation and ownership" which allows donor recipients to operate through a productive power. That is, they govern and develop themselves within the limits of the donor's terms. For instance, in Uganda's case the World Bank called for good governance as part of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).

On the other hand, De Vries (2007) moves away from the governmentality approach which is dominant in post-development scholarship. He argues that "development relies on the production of desires, which it cannot fulfill" (p.30). For him, instead of the anti-politics machine proposed by Ferguson, development should be regarded as a "desiring machine" that "produces a desiring subject who keeps searching for what is in development more than itself; in other words for the 'promise of development'"(De Vries ,2007, p.33).

The invention and deployment of underdevelopment defined not only regions but also populations. Development discourse also produced new identities— developed and underdeveloped. Stuart Hall has argued that identities are constructed within and not outside of discourse (Hall, 1990, p.222). For Hall (1996), identity refers to the temporary

points of attachment of "subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (p.6). Hence, identity describes the "successful articulation or 'chaining' of the subject into the flow of the discourse" (Hall 1996, p.6). However, this successful temporary attachment requires that the subject must also invest in the subject position. As noted above, as the development apparatus came to be accepted people began to see themselves and their societies as underdeveloped. Here one may suggest that the subject position of "underdeveloped" operates like an ethnicity, defined by Hall as social category that is historically, culturally and politically constructed. What we see occurring here is also the mapping of a new social classification, one with roots/routes in colonialism. Hence, it is unsurprising that regions and peoples considered developed and underdeveloped seem to neatly map onto these very same lines of classification: underdeveloped areas consist of people color where the majority of developed areas are considered white. Furthermore, as coloniality reveals, producing underdeveloped subjects seeks to maintain the production of developed subjects mainly in the west.

Attempts to escape the subject position of underdeveloped have meant submission to the systematic interventions necessary to articulate and embody, in contrast, a developed subject position. Development discourse promises what Eduardo Galeano (1997) calls "impossible hopes" – the idea that the "Third World will become like the First World— rich, cultivated and happy if it behaves and does what it is told, without saying anything or complaining " (p.214). For him, if poor countries were to reach the "level of production and waste of the rich countries our planet would die" (p.214). However, as Sachs (1997) observes, the desire for so-called underdeveloped countries to

construct ‘modern infrastructure’ also reveals the “desire for recognition and equity” (p.viii).

Sachs (1997) recognizes that the whole notion of development has been “charged with hopes for redress and self-affirmation” due to the legacy of colonialism and imperialism (p.viii). As such, while development was initially an imposition of a foreign concept established by the West it has now become the “basis for identity” for postcolonial societies. Fundamentally the desire for recognition and equity has been viewed from the perspective of the civilizational model of the West (p.viii), leading Sachs to argue that “the right to cultural self-identity has been compromised by accepting the development world-view” (p.xi). Indeed, as he points out, these countries do not necessarily seek to be “more ‘Indian’, more ‘Brazilian’” rather they aim to attain “industrial modernity” (p.viii –ix). For these countries, even though decolonization has occurred politically, and to some degree economically, imagination remains colonized.

How did people come to see themselves us underdeveloped? Ferguson (1990), drawing on Foucault, offers some insight here in his examination of development as governmentality. For Ferguson, in the case of Lesotho, the development apparatus is a machine that uses poverty as an entry point to expand and entrench state power. Indeed, while development projects may often fail, they also have the political ‘side effect’ of expanding state power. Ferguson asks that we think about these side effects like “instrument effects.” Instrument effects, a concept borrowed from Foucault, are the “effects that are at one and the same time instruments of what ‘turns out’to be an exercise of power” (p.255).

As poverty becomes the entry point, it is depoliticized and reduced to a technical problem that can be solved—or not—with technical solutions. Similarly, Ferguson (1990) notes that the "hegemonic problematic of 'development' is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicized in the world today" (p.256). In Lesotho, for instance, the development apparatus, under the guise of technical solutions, appears to delink politics from crucial social activities. In this way, development's instrument effects operate like what Ferguson calls "the anti-politics machine" (p.256). The "unintended effects" of development projects become politically useful, at times appearing to be vehicles for broader political projects (p.256). Hence, Ferguson argues, it comes as no surprise that failed development projects end up being done repeatedly. Where they fail at their stated goals, they succeed in the broader exercise of power consolidation.

As Escobar (2011) has pointed out, concerns about becoming developed have meant that the governments of underdeveloped countries have implemented all manner of interventions; one of the latest vehicles being neoliberalism. Since the 1970's several countries, including Ghana, have embraced (sometimes through coercion, sometimes voluntarily) the process of neoliberalization. This is characterized by exponential privatization, deregulation, and the withdrawal of state sponsored welfare programs. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank's structural adjustment program liberalized the economy and established Ghana as a "neoliberal pacesetter" on the African continent (Chalfin, 2010, p.6). While the discourse of development appears firmly entrenched in various institutions and practices of the Ghanaian state, sites like popular culture may offer new ways to imagine "alternatives to development."

African Popular Culture and Hiplife

In Africa, popular cultural forms are ubiquitous, relatively affordable and an important part of the lives of most people. Being ubiquitous, they are available to a range of practices and dispositions, including political ones. For instance, popular music in West Africa has been used in anti-colonial struggle and post-independence political resistance. Legendary Afro Beat artist Fela Kuti was jailed for his fierce criticism of the Nigerian military regime. While the African media terrain is typically dominated by elites, popular culture remains a site to echo the voices of the marginalized (Barber, 1987).

Popular culture is an important site of investigation because it is one of the prominent spaces where the struggle for cultural hegemony is waged (Havens et al., 2009; Hall, 1998; Hall, 1993). It is also an ideal space to examine the complex relations between economic and cultural forces, as well as the social relations within the larger society. As scholars have observed, popular culture is a difficult conceptual category to define (Hall, 1998; Barber, 1987). Grossberg (1992) observes that it "has been defined formally (as formularized), aesthetically (as opposed to high culture), quantitatively (as mass culture), sociologically (as the culture of 'the people') and politically (as a resistant folk culture)" (p.75-76).

Stuart Hall (1998) provides us with three ways to think about popular culture: (1) the commercial or market definition (or Bourdieu's large-scale production); (2) the descriptive definition; and the last one which I will call (3) the articulation[2] definition. A

[2] The notion of articulation is an important theory and method Stuart Hall uses throughout his work, not just on popular culture but identity, politics, and ethnicity. It refers to the connection of different elements and groups under specific conditions at a particular point in time.

brief discussion of Hall's definitions allows me to assemble the view I take in this study of Ghanaian hiplife.

(1) The commercial approach highlights the quantitative dimension of popular culture. It describes something that the "masses of people listen to" "buy", "read," "consume," "and seem to enjoy …" (Hall, 1998, p.446). Here, it is worth considering this approach from two perspectives, production and consumption.

One way to understand the production of commercial cultural forms is through Bourdieu's (1993) field of cultural production. A field, to use Thompson's (1991, p.14) useful submission, is "a structured space of positions in which the positions and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or 'capital'" (cited in Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p.212). For Bourdieu, the field of power is comprised of the economic and political fields. The field of power has higher levels of economic capital than the field of the cultural production, while the latter has higher levels of cultural capital than the former. Within the fields of cultural production (musical, artistic) there are "sets of possible positions" (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p.215 - p.216). Struggles are waged by agents to occupy these positions. These struggles "take the form of a battle between established producers, institutions and styles, and heretical newcomers" (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, 215-216). As newcomers win positions the subfield and field are restructured and recreated.

The field of cultural production is comprised of two sub-fields, the small-scale field or "restricted production" and the large-scale or "mass production field" (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p.214). These two fields are characterized by the degree of autonomy they have from the field of power. The large-scale field of production has low

symbolic capital but high economic capital. It is closer to the field of political power, hence it has a lower degree of cultural or artistic autonomy than small-scale production. Further, Bourdieu's two principles of hierarchization, the autonomous pole (the site of "art") and the heteronomous pole (the site of commercial industries), are useful for examining the spectrum of cultural practices that variously combine these two principles within the field of cultural production (Bourdieu and Randal, 1993, p.16). Hall (1998) finds it untenable that popular culture has typically been examined as either pure autonomy or total incorporation (p.447). However, Hesmondhalgh (2006) believes that Bourdieu tends to over-state the polarization between autonomy and heteronomy. He argues that currently, cultural production operates between the borders of the large-scale and restricted fields; "or, perhaps better still, that restricted production has become introduced into the field of mass production" (p.222).

On the question of consumption, some critics argue that the people who consume industrially-produced cultural forms are manipulated to do the bidding of capital—a form of economic reductionism. Influenced by the Frankfurt school, the media are seen to be sustaining false consciousness (Havens et al., 2009). However, commercial popular culture cannot be totally manipulative because people are able to recognize its "false appeals" (Hall, 1998, p.447). Indeed, De Certeau's (1984) concept of 'poaching' reveals how individuals make "innumerable and infinitesimal transformation of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interest and their own rules" (p.xiv). For him, the notion of "popularization or degradation" highlights the way tactics are employed by the weak to confront the powers that control the production of representations (De Certeau, 1984, p.32).

(2) Moving to the descriptive definition, Hall writes, "[p]opular culture is all those things that 'the people' do or have done" (p.448). In using this approach, one would have to create an inventory of all the things the so-called masses do. However, for Hall, what really structures the 'popular' is the distinction between what belongs to the space of the elite or dominant culture and what is relegated to the margins. It does not necessarily mean that forms used by the elites are considered to have high intrinsic value, but it does mean higher status is ascribed to practices and cultural forms of the elite. What is important here are the social relations that maintain those distinctions. As such, the cultural forms or activities may change, but the social relations remain (Hall, 1998, p.449).

(3) This brings us to Hall's definition of 'articulation.' Here, examining 'the popular' requires going to specific historical moments and looking "at those forms and activities which have their roots in the social and material conditions of particular classes" (p.449). This thinking not only preserves features of the descriptive dimension (ways of life), but also emphasizes that any concept of the popular should attend to the ongoing dynamics between dominant and subordinate relations. Here, the meaning of cultural forms is not fixed or inscribed by its position in the cultural field. Indeed, all cultural forms are regarded as contradictory, constituted of "antagonistic and unstable elements" (Hall 1998, p.449). They are also seen as constantly changing. For example, this week's trendy fashion style can be considered old-fashioned the next. For Hall:

> Popular culture is one of the sites where the struggle for and against the culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured. (Hall, 1998, p.453).

Within this approach, popular culture offers us a way to understand the articulation of culture and power. In other words, this is where we can locate the political effectivity of popular culture—those strategies that are able to shift the dispositions of power.

Karin Barber (1987) is one of the first to seriously attempt conceptualizing African popular culture. She argued that the conventional tripartite definition of African culture –traditional, popular and elite—left the popular as a formless category which can only be seen in in contrast to the two established cultural fields. The traditional is often associated with rural peoples and includes cultural forms that remain static across time. Elite cultural forms are claimed to be produced by educated African urbanites who have assimilated to European cultural ways, in terms of "language, forms and conventions" (p.9). The popular is first defined by the degree of deviation from the origin of the traditional (p.10). Hence, she argues, the popular arts express a quality of fluidity due to their undefined and changeable status, wedged in between the two "official sets of cultural canons and institutions;" they are "unofficial arts."

Further, Barber (1987) identifies three themes associated with scholarship on African popular arts, namely novelty (incorporation of new elements), syncretism and change. Taken to together, she believes that these features make popular arts a separate domain worth examining, regardless of a "formally-articulated body of aesthetic canons by which to measure" new examples (p. 12). While she argues that popular arts possess an aesthetic of their own, she admits that they are difficult to inventory because they have "an aesthetic of change, variety and novel conjunctures" (p.12). That said, Barber offers a provisional definition anchored on the tripartite conception of African culture:

> Popular art can be taken to mean the large class of new unofficial art forms which are syncretic, concerned with social change, and associated with the masses. The centers of activity in this field are the cities, in their pivotal position between the rural hinterland on the one hand and the metropolitan countries on the other. (p.23)

Barber's conceptualization warrants a number of comments. As observed, in her definition the popular arts are "urban-focused" but "not exclusively urban" (Barber, 2013, p.xvi). Elsewhere, she acknowledges that the tripartite model of African cultural forms—traditional, popular and elite—is problematic and that a sociological model may have been a better alternative. In that model the "popular is what the people do— whether in the villages or cities, whether in oral performance or global media, whether in the seventeenth century or the twenty-first" (Barber, 2013 p.xvi). Barber also focused on the intermediate classes— "[a]rtisans, apprentices, petty clerks, small entrepreneurs"— who, she argued, were important to cultural production during colonial rule and post-independent Africa (Barber, 2013, p.xvii).

Newell and Okome (2013) argue that Barber's idea maintains that African popular arts "articulate and communicate" an emergent consciousness that can be regarded as an "archive of what was thinkable, what was possible, what was pleasurable, and how it came to be imagined thus at its time of creation" (p.4). For them, the popular arts are a "vital archive of desires and imagined possibilities." Indeed as Barber (1987) notes, cultural forms do not necessarily "reflect an already-constituted consciousness," rather they are vehicles that articulate and communicate consciousness and enable the formulation of "new ways of looking at things."

Hiplife

According to eminent scholar of Ghanaian popular music, John Collins (2005), Ghana's development of popular music can be grouped into three historical moments. First, due to colonialism in the 1880s, foreign music was introduced to seaport towns in southern Ghana. The second moment begins after World War II, with the anticolonial movements for independence. Within this domain arises the "self-conscious Africanization of highlife dance bands and guitar-bands, and associated concert party popular theatre groups" (p.17) (chapter 5). The third moment occurs after the late 1970s with the collapse of the Ghanaian economy and the rise of military rule. Subsequently, a two and half year curfew and high taxation on musical instruments gave birth to new forms like local gospel music and techno pop styles like burgher highlife and hiplife (p.18). What is immediately evident is how popular forms are transcultural and primarily produced in urban centers (Barber, 1987). Transcultural forms like highlife combined traditional local music with "regimental brass-band music of European and West Indian soldiers" (J. Collins, 2005, p.17) while today's hiplife music draws on U.S. hiphop and local highlife. Barber (1987) observes that in popular music, nearly all the foreign influences within syncretic African styles were themselves "African in origin: ragtime, jazz, calypso, reggae, soul have…been brought back to Africa via the recording industry" (p.73).

To begin to discuss hiplife, we have to look at hiphop's early presence in Ghana and in Africa more broadly. Hiphop was initially popular amongst Ghanaian elites who could travel, had the technology, and understood the English language idioms (Shipley, 2009). Indeed, throughout Africa, elite urbanized youth were the early adopters of U.S.

hiphop (Charry, 2012), in contrast to its marginalized origins in the South Bronx. Charry (2012) argues that in the 1980s, when there was little rap music featured in African mass media, rap audio and video were brought piece by piece by Africans travelling abroad, largely from places like New York and Paris. African rap largely followed a noticeable trajectory: directly imitating U.S. hiphop language and accents, and then, substituting "English language lyrics and localizing it by rapping in African languages (or at least letting go of the American accents) about issues of relevance to their communities" (p.12). Eventually, in the mid-1990s African rappers, producers and DJs localized the music.

In Ghana, as hiphop began to be embraced widely, Shipley (2009) suggests, it no longer represented an aesthetic of U.S. African American resistance but one that symbolized a kind of elite status (p.646). The fashion styles—baggy pants, trainers, Timberland boots, baseball caps— became popular aesthetic choices that allowed young people in Accra to identify with the plight of African Americans whilst drawing on self-fashioning as "cultural capital by claiming access to elite, cosmopolitan forms of modernity" (Shipley, 2009, p.646- p.647). Mbembe (2008) has observed that this form of cosmopolitanism— "local re-appropriation of symbolic resources of globalization" — was used by elites in Africa to partly reconstruct their identity (p.109).

Hiplife emerged from Jamaican ragga and U.S. hiphop, which were popular in Ghana around the 1990's. For Osumare (2012, 2014) hiplife illustrates "the circle of music and dance influences from Africa to its diaspora and back again," what she calls "the arc of mutual inspiration" (p.188). For her, hiphop's roots are not "quintessentially African American; but these roots are culturally, eclectically, and syncretically as wide

ranging as they are deep" (Osumare, 2012, p.85). Keyes (2002) also suggests that some early pioneers of rap in New York draw directly from connections to Africa. In contrast, Charry (2012) does not necessarily believe that rap directly originates from indigenous African cultural forms. Indeed, he points out that even the first crop of African rappers "had little relationship with the traditional performance genres of their home countries and were often more culturally allied with the United States" (Charry, 2012, p.4). For him, African rap was borne out of the "direct imitation and appropriation of imported American rap" (Charry, 2012, p.4).

Hiplife also incorporates various elements from Ghanaian highlife. In fact, Osumare (2014) sees hiplife not only as an adaptation of U.S. hiphop but a revision of older highlife (p.187). Like its successor, highlife, a transcultural form that blends traditional (not to be construed as 'tribal') music and foreign music, began in the 1920s (J. Collins, 2005). The coinage "highlife" has origins in the local elite ballroom dance orchestras (J. Collins, 2005). Thus, within the history of highlife we observe that not only is the practice of reappropriation not new, but the term itself reflects elite status accorded to European popular music forms at the time. Additionally, highlife was equally dominated by Ghanaian men. The few women who participated were seen as "immoral and sexually loose" (J. Collins, 2003, p.1 cited in Jabbaar-Gyambrah, 2008, p.89).

Several factors facilitated hiplife's growth, amongst them the liberalization of the Ghanaian economy, Ghanaians returning from being abroad, the return to civilian rule in 1992, and the constitution that ensured the establishment of private media institutions (Shipley, 2012). Indeed, Charry (2012) observes that as "national political systems opened up to multiparty democracies in many [African] countries, rap began to flourish"

(p.15). Meanwhile, some of the Ghanaian returnees had acquired skills in broadcasting and electronic media and were influenced by their exposure to U.S. African American music. The older generation regard hiplife as the latest corrupting influence from the West, eroding 'traditional' values (respect for elders) and promoting immorality (J. Collins, 2005). Another pressing concern for this burgeoning form of African cultural production was whether it was creating something original that young people could relate to (Charry, 2012). As Panji Anoff, a hiplife pioneer, pointed out, "[i]f hiplife was going to be about translating America into Africa, then I wanted no part of it. My idea was always to translate Africa into something global" (in Living the Hiplife, Shipley 2007 cited in Carry, 2012, p.11).

Hiplife has not only become a site to where Ghanaian artists can earn a living but also a vehicle for contributing to national discourse. Osumare's (2012) idea of "connective marginalities" argues that the marginalized status of youth in many societies makes hiphop music and culture a source of personal and collective agency. For instance, Okyeame Kwame, the hiplife artist uses his fame to draw attention to Hepatitis B through education and medical screenings (Osumare, 2014, p.194). Further, hiplife music making becomes a space where other worlds arise and new identities are cultivated. Hiplife artists "[cultivate] themselves as subjects able to enact new futures;" for to change ourselves is also to change our worlds (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.xxvii). Young people, who otherwise would be unemployed, find opportunities as DJs, musicians, directors, and cinematographers within the hiplife industry. However, in spite of institutional support, Shipley (2012) observes that hiplife music making "involves passion and hard work, social networking and business savvy" (p.226). Indeed, he argues that collaborations and

informal exchange networks based on "friendship and camaraderie" have been an important catalyst for the development and circulation of hiplife music (Shipley, 2012, p.207).

In Ghana, hiplife artists have had to balance benefiting economically from their music and "keeping it real," so to speak (Osumare, 2012, p.162). Nonetheless, hiplife artists have become complicit in what Ousmare (2014) calls "corporate colonialism" by priming Ghanaian youth tastes for "global consumer products" (p.189). Ousmare's (2014) examination of corporate-artist relationships (hiplife artists and transnational telecommunications) also shows that the contract terms and conditions restrict the agency of the artists. For example, the oft cited clause that bars artists from appearing on events that are sponsored by other telecom companies. Nonetheless, the corporate interest in this contemporary genre is telling in regard to its popular importance in Ghana. To an extent, hiplife artists endeavor to live the good life similar to the figure of the "homeboy" in Diawara's (2009) discussion on U.S. hiphop. Practices of homeboy activism center "mobility and consumption" as core elements in the pursuit of the "black good life" (Diawara, 2009, p.273).

Beyond the discussions above, a prominent feature worth highlighting is the gendered nature of hiplife music. While hiplife has become a source of collective agency it is gendered in the sense that female artists are constrained in their deployment of such agency. Hiplife continues to remain a male dominated sphere, as such, the songs can be viewed as representing men's experiences as subjects in a postcolonial space. To be sure, the underrepresentation of women in hiplife speak to the general marginalization of female voices in Ghanaian media. J. Collins (2003) has argued that until 1960's there

were very few West African women performers in popular entertainment. Female hiplife artists are rare, not to mention they generally fail to achieve mainstream success in Ghana. Indeed, most female musicians perform Ghanaian gospel as the church has historically served as a vehicle for Ghanaian women to enter the popular music industry (Collins, 2003). Some of the current female hiplife artists include Eno Barony, Freda Rhymz and Abena Rockstar.

The development of hiplife was also promoted through television and music videos. Shipley (2012) notes that programs like Smash TV, Goldblast and others such as Music Music were important entertainment shows that featured artist interviews and performances. As TV stations increased time slots for local music videos, it became one way that young Ghanaians experienced hiplife music and culture. Charry (2012) argues that within Africa more generally, mass media tend to show more "American or highly commercialized African music videos" (p.18). In 2005, MTV Base, a 24-hour English language channel was launched in South Africa to target young Africans. The South African music channel, Channel O, also broadcasts music videos and sponsors music video award shows. In Ghana, the 4syte Music Video Awards show was launched in 2009 to reward the music video industry.

However, scant attention has been given to hiplife music videos, which is surprising since hiplife is an important medium of self-representation and modelling success. Shipley's (2012) book contains a brief analysis of music videos of Reggie Rockstone, Mensa, and Mzbel, amongst others. In his discussion of Reggie Rockstone's music videos Shipley argues that it is "a visual aesthetic of urban masculine leisure" (p.103). In the videos Accra is presented as an urban space of "excitement and

possibility." Rockstone's early videos follows "shots and sequences" that were similar to U.S. hiphop music videos of "rap crews claiming urban space through partying" (p.103).

Hiplife studies have primarily focused on the artists and other cultural producers of hiplife music (Shipley, 2012; Osumare, 2012/2014; Oduro-Frimpong, 2009). Meanwhile, the people who consume it and make it popular have been under examined. Beyond Shipley's work, very few studies have critically examined music videos in Ghana or Africa more broadly. A close examination of the music video samplings used in previous scholarship also reveals that most of the videos are either from MTV, BET and VH1, which are all U.S.-based cable companies. Indeed, with the boom in music video research that occurred during the rise of MTV in the 1980s, Africa was largely ignored.

Research Questions and Methodology

From the scholarship discussed above I propose the following research questions:

- How do cultural workers make music videos in postcolonial Ghana? With this question I aim to examine the production processes involved in the creation of music videos. Thus, I will be able to discern the various stages: conceptual creation, video shooting, editing and then the distribution and circulation of said music videos. I draw on interview data, participant observations and archival sources, such as video submission forms, casting calls, and reports from the Musicians Union of Ghana.
- What do hiplife music video cultural workers think is decolonial about their cultural activities? This question is related to the first, and is aimed at exploring ways artists, video directors and other video industry workers attempt to think about the identities they produce in the videos. I also aim to uncover the politics of possibilities where aesthetic practices are geared towards decolonizing sensibilities.

- How are race and gender articulated in the cultural production of hiplife music videos? As noted, hiplife is a male-dominated domain, and from my previous research the music video industry is also male dominated. Here, I am interested in exploring how gender and race shape the way women are represented and featured in music videos. How do racial ideologies of beauty, for instance, influence casting decisions? To address these issues I draw on interview data and participant observation. I will also conduct textual analysis of selective hiplife videos. One prominent type of video to examine are the ones about women; often these songs are titled after the literal or metaphorical subject of the song, such as D-Black's song "Vera" (2012).
- What do audiences think about the performance of success in hiplife music videos? With this question I want to examine how audiences perceive hiplife videos. What kinds of ideas do they think these videos are communicating?

To answer the questions above I follow Havens et al.'s (2009) critical media industry studies approach to the examination of popular cultural institutions. Their approach generally draws on critical political economy and critical cultural studies. In their review, they observe that traditional macro level industry analysis of political economy and its economic determinism often pay little attention to entertainment and provide inadequate theorization of actor's agency in media entities. However, they do observe that some critical political economic scholars from Europe (for example Bernard Miège) recognize that "economic factors must be connected to complex practices that produce a field of images and discourses" (p.238). Clearly, their critique of some political economic macrolevel analyses signals their preferred approach which takes seriously the

quotidian practices of human agents, those instances of creativity and contestation over "representational practices" (p.236). Their approach calls for midlevel fieldwork and industry analyses to comprehend the complex relationship between cultural and economic forces (p.237). Further, rather than regarding power purely as economic control, they see it as "productive," in the sense that it constructs particular ways to think about audiences, cultural forms and economics (p.237). Indeed, they are concerned with the "micropolitics of everyday meaning-making" in industry operations and production practices (Murdock & Golding, 2005, p. 61 cited in Havens et al., 2009, p.237). Within Havens et al.'s (2009) framework, media industries and processes are regarded as articulations, complex and contradictory spaces of ideological struggle (in the Gramscian sense) which do not necessarily guarantee specific meanings in representation (p.236).

Following Havens et al. call for midlevel fieldwork, my work also employs ethnographic methods, textual analysis, and visual ethnography. Ethnographic methods for the study of popular culture are useful for the following purposes: examining processes and practices; ascertaining participants' meanings and subjectivities; openness and flexibility; understanding the specific context in which participants operate and how that context shapes their actions (Maxwell 2012, p.30; Tracy, 2012; Cohen, 1993). In popular music studies, Cohen insisted that the disproportionate use of statistical, textual and journalistic text must be balanced with ethnographic work (p.123). She suggested that an ethnographic approach should focus on social relations by "emphasizing music as social practice and process," and it should be "comparative and holistic; historical and dialogical; reflexive and policy-oriented" (Cohen, 1993, p.123).

With Institutional Review Board approval, the informed consent form provided co-participants with general information about the project and informed them about how I intended to use and store their information to ensure confidentiality. The form asked them if the interview could be audio or video recorded. Participants also had the option to not have their identity disclosed in my project, at which point pseudonyms were used. Out of the 54 interviews formally conducted in 2017 only three participants opted to keep their identities confidential. Some of the participants did not read the form, but they listened to me explain the project and its underlying purpose. Some participants found the form to be tedious as it had five sections that required signatures for audio; video; future use of transcripts for teaching; confidentiality and volunteer consent for participation.

Fieldwork

My research site was Accra, the capital city of Ghana in the Greater Accra region. The city contains the only international airport in Ghana and thus stands between the metropole and the urban and rural areas of Ghana. Accra was also home to several hiplife artists and music video directors. Indeed, the Musicians Union of Ghana report on the Ghanaian music industry estimated that 54.6% of musicians worked in the Greater Accra region, as do 59.3% of music producers. [3]

Apart from being the site that birthed hiplife music, Accra is also the central location of major popular music events. It is also home to the National Theater of Ghana and the Accra International Conference Center; both venues are very popular spots for events like the Ghana Music Awards and the 4syte Music Video Awards. These two

[3] See the Musigha commissioned "A Comprehensive Study of the Music Sector in Ghana." Retrieved from https://www.ghanacelebrities.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/FINAL-REPORT-COMPREHENSIVE-STUDY-OF-THE-MUSIC-SECTOR-IN-GHANA.pdf

prime venues have a seating capacity of 1,500 and 1,800 respectively. Sometimes the Accra Sports stadium is also used to host large events.

Participant observation: Participant observations allowed me to concentrate on music video making activities in Accra. I leveraged the flexibility of the ethnographic approach to examine what Finnegan (1989) calls "pathways," an often hidden or unstated structure that undergirds music-making. I examined the contexts in which cultural producers work in order to understand, amongst other things, their agency or what Gibson-Graham (2006) describe as the "freedom to act," which is central to the politics of possibility (p. xxvi). I carried out participant observations at music video shoots, video production houses, live concerts and other locations, such as talk parties, music video launches, album listening parties and more, where hiplife music production and consumption occurs.

I observed that the events became the nerve centers of cultural activity in Accra, bringing various members of the creative industry together. Within the independent art scene, painters would attend concerts supporting fellow upcoming musicians; likewise, musicians would attend photography exhibitions of their fellow upcoming photographers. A prime example of this synergy being Efo Sela and contributing artists, whose exhibition at Alliance Française was opened by spoken word artist Elikplim who was in turn accompanied by a dance performance. The Chale Wote Arts festival also brought together many local and international artists who engage in a myriad of artistic forms and disciplines.

Live concerts presented a challenge, since my role as a researcher was not immediately obvious to attendees. However, I endeavored to inform the people I

interacted with of my research intention. At times, this would lead to an interview in the future. Generally, I found people were willing to schedule an interview for a later date. I attended several live performances at Alliance Française, the French cultural arm in Ghana. The Alliance Française concert space is small and relatively affordable making it a popular venue for independent upcoming artists. The German and Dutch cultural arms of their respective embassies are also prominent in the independent creative spaces. In general, there are very few performance spaces available to artists. I also attended the 4syte Music Video Awards which started more than two hours late. Tardiness was quite common for events, but there seemed to be a logic behind it. It was reasoned that Ghanaians are typically late to events, so when a show's start time is advertised for 7:00pm the actual start time maybe 8:00pm. In my participant observations, my phone became an important tool to capture fieldnotes, as well as my camera.

At the concerts I was able to engage in material reciprocity by purchasing concert tickets and albums. The concerts also proved to be very tasking, as I was attending events late into the night: sometimes returning home the next day. I faced a similar demanding schedule when I accepted a position as a behind the scenes photographer for Fofo Gavua's first film production. During these late-night movements within Accra, I was encountering a city I did not really know since I was not accustomed to night life growing up in Accra.

Through my participation I observed how artists navigated Accra and the hurdles they faced to make their art. In fact, on one occasion heading home at night after a film shoot I was stopped with some friends at police check point. We were targeted because of prejudices against men with locks who are perceived to be "weed smokers." My late-

night movements were also a source of concern to my father who one time called at 12:00am concerned over when I was heading home. At times, I sensed that he would wait up for me.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Over the course of three years, between 2015 and 2017, I have conducted a total of 98 formal interviews and many informal conversations with various cultural producers within the music video production scene and creative industry in general. In total, I have talked to 70 men and 28 women. As semi-structured interviews, the conversations were organized around a set of flexible questions that were designed to encourage discussion. This approach allowed me to gain emic perspectives and provided the space for co-participants to express their complex points of view (Tracy, 2012). My interviews with music video directors, cinematographers, video editors, music video models and dancers were tailored to ascertaining their creative processes, motivations, and the broader dimensions of what they thought were the problems within the music video scene, and in Ghana, generally. I also sought to understand what they thought their possible roles were in addressing these problems. In addition, I wanted to understand their aspirations for the country. The interviews informed me about making music videos in Ghana; the aesthetic influences, personal backgrounds of the cultural workers and so on. They were conducted face-to-face. Further, I carried out numerous informal conversations on production sets, concerts, lectures and other events I attended.

Throughout the interview process, I adopted a self-reflexive position that allowed me to be conscious of how my positionality was impacting the encounter. I was initiating and largely structuring those research encounters as my questions determined the direction of the engagement. Generally, I observed that when the participants learnt that I

study in the U.S. they appeared to want to give me what they thought were the "right" response. At times, they were anxious about giving me responses that were unhelpful. Often, I would assure them that there was no right or wrong answer and that their opinion was what was paramount in the conversation. I adopted a conversational approach during the interview, speaking like I would typically do in any informal conversation, switching through multiple languages. Indeed, my co-participants did the same as they spoke in the language they were comfortable in, often switching between three different languages during the conversation. All used English and occasionally Twi and Pidgin English which has become the language of the youth (particularly young men). I also drew upon the commonalities between us. For instance, I interviewed a few people who attended the same high school as me. In Ghana, people are often very proud of their high schools and alumni networks are an important form of social-cultural capital akin to the fraternities in the U.S.

Initially, I had planned to conduct video interviews, but quickly abandoned the idea after my first interview with a director. Rather than answer my questions, I observed that he appeared to be more concerned with performing the right answers for the camera. This director, who had told me that he had shot over a hundred music videos, was visibly uncomfortable with being in front of a camera. I also interviewed the eclectic/eccentric artist Wanlov the Kubolor who proved more comfortable in front of the camera; he even did the interview shirtless. Since I was meeting most of the participants in private establishments in Accra, it was much easier to use an audio device for recording than to pull out camera and go through the process negotiating permission. At times, the size and professional look of the camera attracted unproductive scrutinization. Generally, audio

recording was less invasive and less conspicuous which allowed my participants to feel less pressure during the interview.

To find participants to interview, I would attend concerts, listening sessions, other cultural events centered around the creative arts to meet people and set up interviews. For instance, I met Anita Afonu, a filmmaker, at a women's film festival, I met Alex Wondergem at a listening session in Jamestown. My observations on video production sets also enabled me to connect with several people who I would later interview. All the dancers I interviewed for this project were people I met on the set. At times, participants also recommended people to interview.

While folks would enthusiastically say yes to an interview, setting up the interviews was another hurdle. Potential participants would at times not respond to text messages or they would reschedule interviews several times. In one instance, a potential participant rescheduled many times before she confessed that she did not have the money to meet at the agreed location she had suggested. This brought into sharp focus the demands I was making on my co-participants. To be sure, I did endeavor to ensure that I would reduce the burden and inconvenience as much as possible by always asking the participant to choose a location. In one incident, I drove 45 minutes to observe a music video production but after arriving at the location I could not reach the director who had invited me. After waiting for almost an hour I left and was so infuriated I never spoke to this director again. At times, the participants would show up with a friend or their manager. During the interview these observers would sometimes interject, thus their presence also informed the dynamics of the conversation. Sometimes, after the interview I would drop them off at their next location if I was driving. During some of my

interviews with directors, I would get to see work in progress and unreleased finished work.

My interviews took place in a myriad of locations. I was invited to the intimate spaces of my participants; their houses and even their bedroom turned home recording studios. For instance, Ayat and Papa Chi welcomed me into their bedrooms. As I write I do not recall hesitating to visit artists in their homes or in their bedrooms to conduct interviews. In all the instances that I was invited into homes the participants were men, except one woman who was a longtime friend and former classmate. Certainly, my maleness not only enabled these particular kinds of access but also my ability to go into these spaces worry free.

Visual Ethnography: Following Shipley (2012), I employed the camera not only as a recording device, but as "a medium through which new knowledge can be ascertained" (Pink, 2013, p.11). For instance, in Shipley's (2012) project, the collaborative editing process with artists helped him understand "music as a form of self-representation" (p.10). It allowed him to observe how artists wanted to present themselves to the public. In my case, working as a behind the scenes photographer, I realized the request for pictures from models and dancers was indicative of the desire to build their social media brand. Social media work was an important aspect of the music video scene as directors informed me they regularly looked for models on Instagram.

In my project, the camera also became a tool that I used to build relationships with upcoming artists. I photographed their live performances and offered the pictures to them for free. This was a way for me to engage in reciprocity for their time spent talking to me. I also aimed to understand what they thought about these images and how they

intended to use them. One artist would go on to use the image to make posters for an upcoming event.

In this work, I was aware that photographing people raises critical ethical concerns because it can be intrusive and is the least anonymous in all the data gathering methods (Banks, 1998, p.30). In my experience at the concert sites, people were more willing to be photographed compared to everyday activities. Moreover, there were usually several people there with cameras capturing the happenings of the event. However, I often focused on the artists (who are already highly photographed subjects) and their performances. Indeed, I was also aware that my presence would impact the "reality" I was studying, especially because I was using a camera. It may, as Shipley (2012) observed, orient performances towards the camera, inviting people to shift their activities, pose, address me instead of each other, etc.

My camera and drone alongside my photography and burgeoning video making skills also gave me access to certain spaces. For instance, Kwame Write invited me to participate in an interview with Prof. Collins, a renowned scholar of Ghanaian popular music, because he wanted me to video record the conversation. When I went for the Sarkodie's "Highest" (2017) album signing I was immediately allowed on the stage because of my camera. I noticed they were friendly to folks who held professional looking cameras. At the concerts, the camera became a tool that also allowed me to focus on the artists performances.

While on the production sets, my principle role was as a behind the scenes photographer. During my fieldwork I shot images for six music productions and one feature film. One upcoming director invited me to his set four times because he wanted to

use my drone in the video. As a photographer on set I was able to move and interact with the cultural producers on set as I captured them performing their work. On one occasion on a movie set, the make-up artist warned me not to take a picture of her or else she would break my camera.

My identity as a researcher was less prominent as I moved with a camera within the production space. I was well aware of this and engaged the crew and talent on set by informing them that I was also conducting research. The dancers and models were especially interested in having their images captured; often at the end of the shoot they would reach out to me for their images.

Archival Research: Through the life of the project, I collected text, images and audio-visual materials to examine hiplife music and culture. I bought the entertainment edition of the largest circulated newspaper in Ghana, the Daily Graphic Showbiz. I carried out qualitative analysis of content of hiplife music videos, social media profiles, blogs/websites and media interviews of hiplife artists. The media interviews were used to supplement my interviews; particularly the top artists I could not access. I also examined billboards, posters, tickets and flyers about events related to hiplife concerts. These allowed me to further understand the self-representation strategies hiplife artists employ. I also looked selectively at the reports on the music industry and the cultural policy of Ghana. This gave me insight into how the industry and government view the role of cultural production in the "development" of Ghana.

Social media was used extensively to look for events, follow artists, and comment on current affairs in Ghana. In fact, my active participation on twitter got me invited to a listening session. Social media also became a way of maintaining connections with some

of the artists I interviewed. I regularly interacted with artists online, sharing and commenting on their videos. My social media activity helped me attain some visibility within the creative communities; at events I would sometimes be approached by people who claimed to follow me online. They would tell me how much they appreciated my cultural commentary on Ghana.

In a large part my labor on social media was an attempt to engage mainstream narratives on questions of the political economy of development, gender, race and culture making. Almost every morning I listened to a popular English language radio breakfast show commenting on and asking questions that sought to problematize dominant notions of social transformation. Social media became a personal, but public, research journal as I articulated ideas and insights from my observations and interviews. I hoped that in sharing these ideas, mostly unfinished thoughts, I was inviting dialogue with creative communities I was connected to on twitter and beyond. Importantly, I was also theorizing "out loud," ensuring that the knowledge I was coproducing was visible to these communities. Theorizing out loud, as process of synthesizing my research became a reflexive endeavor.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process can be divided in the three broad activities: data management, data reduction and conceptual development (Lindlof and Taylor, 2000). I employed NVivo to help with the categorization, storage and sorting of my data. The data reduction process entailed drawing themes and codes that spoke to my immediate research concerns. Lastly, as Lindlof and Taylor (2000) note, as concepts and themes

emerged early in the project, they may be reduced, and connections made between them. These ideas influenced my project as it unfolded.

My data analysis begun in the field; I immediately noted inductively emerging themes that were arising through my interviews and captured them in short memos that I later expounded. I employed "asides, commentaries, and in-process memos" (Emerson *et al*, 2011). These allowed me to quickly jot down analyses that helped me understand or question my observations or interviews. Further, these bits of writing served as a useful springboard to explore evolving concepts. This initial analysis was also contrasted with later analysis when I revisited that data after a period with fresh perspectives.

Generally, I organized the data inductively into emerging categories, an "analytic process of sorting units of data with respect to properties they have in common" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p.246). This allowed me to make connections between units or clusters of data to a broader phenomenon. For example, performances of success in the form of displaying access to western countries may relate to aspirations associated with developmentalism. Coding, both open and in vivo, helped me connect these clusters of data to categories. Open coding involved initially going through the data and developing as many categories as emerged. As the research process evolved the relationship between categories were made evident. On the other hand, in vivo coding implied drawing on the "terms used by social actors to characterize their own scene" (p.251). Coding required constant comparison and contrast to determine which category cluster the codes belonged to. To this end, I also considered how the categories that emerge were related to ideas about development discourse and modernity. My observations and images also provided an understanding of the context in which my participants operated.

Throughout this process, I endeavored to maintain a reflexive stance to account for my role in the interpretation and subsequent development of the ethnographic account. I was cognizant that my critical decolonial stance may orient me to focus on particular concerns. However, ethnographic accounts are constructions of the ethnographer (Emerson et al., 2011). Indeed, I was not recording but constructing a reality, and shaping how that reality is represented, while trying to stay open to challenges to my perspective at a range of levels. As Willis (2007) simply notes, the ambition of the ethnographic imagination to "is to tell 'my story' about 'their story' through the fullest conceptual bringing of 'their story'" (p.xii). Since language cannot mirror reality, the ethnographic account is a "product of the researcher's own sensibility (including its forming puzzles and theories) as it encounters another set of practices and practical theories among agents" (p.116). However, we must ensure that "subjective evaluations and meaning" of what the participants are doing are not recorded in the same manner as facts (p.116). While some ethnographers do not believe that accounts should be reduced to poetics like dramatic writing, Willis (2007) argues that this is one of the strengths of the approach. For him, the very "constructedness of representation" can be used "to produce desired ends" that may cause people to critically reflect on taken-for-granted ideas (Willis, 2007, p.116-117). Similarly, Emerson et al. (2011) advocate for writing narrative tales by drawing on literary conventions to develop narratives that will interest an audience (p.170). For my part, writing creatively not only requires thinking creatively but expands the very space for this creative thinking to occur. Thinking creatively, Gibson-Graham (2008) argue, will enable the generation of "actual possibilities where none formerly existed" (p.625).

A Reflexive Note

I landed in Accra full of excitement and a bit of fear. I was carrying a drone that had been gifted to me just before for I left for Ghana. The drone would eventually help me participate on the set of four music video productions. My sister, a customs officer, had informed me that a new set of procedures required folks to formally seek permission before bringing drones into the country. I was a bit anxious about facing the immigration officers who, in the past, had never really troubled me. I had been told stories about their of seizing drones only to release them after the owners paid fines. As usual, I could not find information online that would allow me to apply for permission to bring the drone. Thus, with uncertainty on my back, the first of many such occasions in this research journey, I landed in Ghana. Fortunately, I breezed through immigration and customs, without having being searched, to meet my older sister and niece who always picked me up from the airport. (On a side note: before flying the drone, I promptly paid the $20 fee to secure a permit from Ghana Civil Aviation Authority.) Every time I saw my niece she had grown a few more inches. This was the beginnings of my research work in Accra at the end of May, 2017, just in time for my mother's 72nd birthday.

I dwell on this vignette as "a critical act of standing in the present critically reflecting on past experience" (Alexander, 2011, p.104) to return to my research encounters. Alexander (2011) encourages us to see "[r]eflexivity as a method of owning what the researcher brings to the ethnographic moment, contemplating and articulating how the ethnographer's physical and political presence impacted the happening" (p.104). Yet, it is also a journey of uncertainty; in returning to the research encounters, the researcher cannot foresee their destination. It is also "an act of political self-awareness."

Ethnographic writing from "a space particularity" can help us appreciate what "we have already seen and [experienced] with critical detail to our role in the moment of remembrance and how that newly discovered understanding might inform our role in social change"(p.105). Reflexivity as a political praxis works towards deconstructing "the relationships between the authority of the author and/or of the power difference in field relations, particularly between the ethnographer and cultural others" (105). For it promises that what is often hidden in ethnographic writing— the author's positionality and their biases—are brought to the fore. This exposure, Alexander (2011) suggests, makes reflexivity also a vulnerable act.

So I was back in Accra. I had returned home, to family, friends, creative communities, familiar spaces, sights, smells, and sounds. Yet, I had not returned the same person, and not returning the same would be both fruitful and contentious. For instance, my awakening to patriarchal harms and my commitment to gender justice and LGBTQ liberation, proved to be sources of heated debate between me and my friends in Accra. I had returned, ready to start the final leg of my dissertation research. This entailed navigating Accra's busy and congested city streets, the streets where I grew up, with a more "analytical lens." Or, at least, with the objective of addressing my research concerns. Practices and systems I had taken for granted I would now look at with critical curiosity. To be honest, I did not think this was a particularly difficult task. Indeed, my graduate school journey in the US encouraged me to develop an appreciation for the texture, colors, sounds and smells of Accra. It was as if my stint away had imbued me, to paraphrase W.E.B. DuBois, with the gift of second sight. I found myself more attentive, perhaps because the dullness of grey winter days in Massachusetts provided a sharp

contrast to the heat, vibrancy and color of Accra's urban landscape. (Indeed, prior to my fieldwork, I had not spent a single summer in Massachusetts.) The writer Nii Ayikwei Parkes reminded me that living outside has a way of making you appreciate what is home. He suggests, "sometimes you have to be outside to realize the value of your own culture and for it to really start to reflect in [your] work in a more conscious way." The Ghanaian privileges—as an educated middle-class man—that enabled me to voluntarily fly over the Atlantic and cross national borders, became secondary to my always already racialized identity in the U.S. as a black man and African immigrant before graduate student. Yet, this proximity to the hard edges of U.S. American racism contributed to my appreciation of local and global racial projects.

This insight became useful during my many conversations in the creative communities in Accra; I was struck by the version of the U.S. some of my participants and acquaintances described. It was a glossy Hollywood version, an image of the U.S. that I had long discovered to be incomplete. To be sure, how the U.S. was imagined seemed to uphold the very ideas within development discourse that shaped my research interests. In the conversations, I would attempt to reveal to them the underside of the US, the price of this glossy image aptly captured in the idea of the "American dream." Indeed, a different story emerges when one considers the genocide of Native Americans that helped established this settler colony and how the enslavement of Africans is the foundation of this country's tremendous wealth. Here, I am reminded of how these histories are often ignored in Ghana. I vividly recall listening to Mensa Otabil, the prominent Ghanaian Christian preacher with his brand of African consciousness suggest that the U.S. is wealthy because its forefathers believed in God and thus, the riches the

country currently enjoys are trickled-down blessings. In encountering the U.S. underside, I also became somewhat of an informant, offering a critical version of the U.S. often erased from popular discussions in Ghana (as in the U.S. itself) and lost in the sea of red, blue and white flags so conspicuous in Accra's streets.

My direct experiences with the U.S. underside were perhaps more evident when I participated in the Water Project during my masters in Athens, Ohio, which sought to bring attention to environmental water issues in the Appalachian Ohio Valley. I learned the acid mine drainage from abandoned coal mines leaked into streams and rivers, toxifying and tinting them with an orange-yellow color. It was during this project that I learned about the Appalachian Regional Development act of 1965, which established the Appalachian Regional Commission tasked with overseeing economic development of the impoverished Appalachian region. Here, as I reflected on these experiences in impoverished Appalachia, I saw parallels with various aspects of development discourse. While developmentalism was not necessarily part of the national US conversation, in Appalachia it was. For instance, the Appalachian Regional commission project focuses on "business development, telecommunications and technology infrastructure and use, educational attainment, access to health care, tourism development, and the construction of development highways and basic water and waste management facilities.[4]" These were similar to the "basics" that many of my research co-participants in Ghana suggested were fundamental problems of Ghana.

[4] See "Appalachian Regional Commission." Retrieved from https://www.arc.gov/about/ARCProjects.asp

My identities: Ghanaian, Ga, male, son, brother, graduate, graduate student, "been to" (the West), middle class, abled bodied, heterosexual, cis-gendered, drone owner, photographer and more, were all embodied in my ethnographic identity as well as my espoused political commitments to decoloniality and liberatory performances of gender, particularly Ghanaian masculinity. These identities also shaped my research encounters, what I saw and what I was I allowed to see as well as the spaces I could enter and those where I refused to go. Due to high incidents of fatal road accidents, I avoided long road travel which prevented me from following cultural producers as they performed or shot music videos in locations outside the Greater Accra region. Indeed, I lost a dear friend in a fatal road accident on his way to school from Accra to the Northern Region. Further, in casual conversations with acquaintances, I would downplay the fact that I was a doctoral student and simply state that I was a student. It was not to be deceptive, but to prevent that identity from framing all my interactions. While some of these conversations were not necessarily connected to my research work, it is difficult to claim categorically that they may not have influenced my work. They certainly influenced my own consciousness in the field.

Admittedly, the direct benefits of this research project are asymmetrical: I was the greatest beneficiary in the research exchange. The dissertation's main audience would, at the outset, be my academic committee of four. I was the one who was going to receive a doctorate from North America together with its attendant social, cultural and economic capital. Indeed, after successful completion I alone would earn the title Doctor, Doctor Nikoi or Doc. (In Ghana, often people with doctorates are simply referred to as Doc, partly as a consequence of the high status attached to academic titles.) The tension

produced by this asymmetry remained unresolved throughout the journey of my project. For instance, while the "capitals"—the privileges— invariably enabled access, they were also potentially reproducing the very issues that animated what my research was attempting to reveal, dismantle and reconstruct. Indeed, I wondered, did I simply reproduce structures and systems that privileged educated straight Ghanaian men? Did my labor in Accra make the space better or worse?

On this point, I continued to wrestle with the uncertainties and unresolved tensions which manifested in many ways throughout the life of this project. To be sure, an important part of my project is actively participating in the work of decoloniality, not merely writing about it. I did not perceive myself as simply collecting data which I would later analyze in the ivory tower of a North American university. Indeed, I saw this project contributing to the unfinished work of liberating Africa from neocolonial exploitation and oppression.

My stint living and studying in the U.S. had sharpened my political consciousness in new ways. I became more critical about the contours of power, how it shaped human relations and how various bodies were forced to navigate the world. More importantly, in the heart of empire I also witnessed some of the fiercest resistance against oppression and exploitation: from the demands and demonstrations of Black Lives Matters to value black lives to several anti-capitalist protests. Further, in the US, I was alerted to the long history of diasporan African leaders, activists and political thinkers visiting Ghana during its peak anti-colonial moment. They included Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, C.L.R James, Franz Fanon, Shirley DuBois, and W.E.B DuBois, who renounced his U.S. citizenship to become Ghanaian.

To partly understand these connections, the black radical thinker Harold Cruse (1968), offers some insight. Cruse regarded the African American experience in the United States as a form of internal colonialism, and U.S. African American persons as semi-colonial subjects. In comparing their plight to the colonized, underdeveloped nations around the world, Cruse notes how U.S. African Americans suffered from "illiteracy, disease,… cultural starvation and the psychological reactions to being ruled over by others not [themselves]" (Cruse, 1968, p.76). He explained that while European colonization in Africa was occurring, the US had established a colonial system in its Southern states. Importantly, he argued, U.S. African Americans have the same relationship with U.S. capitalism as other underdeveloped colonial nations have towards Western capitalism in general (Cruse, 1968, p.110).

I have long observed that Ghana's rich anti-racist and anti-colonial history has been effaced from popular memory. In this way, my project sought to contribute in some way to recuperating these radical histories and ideas of struggle that animated Ghanaian freedom-making in the 1950s. Also, I attempted reveal that popular, endogenous explanations about Ghana's so-called underdevelopment were, in fact, erasing the persistence of unfair and unequal global relations that were largely introduced with colonialism. Practically, this objective informed my volunteer work at a popular radio station in Accra. I naively reasoned that if I engaged journalists on these issues, they would be able to use their mainstream presence to ask new questions about the nature of our "underdeveloped" condition. I quickly came to understand the complex factors shaping news production in Ghana. For instance, journalists have a difficult time

accessing information from the state while politicians employ soft power to constrain the work of media folks.

Broadly, in this ethnographic experience, I was telling a story—my story—about encounters in and journeys through the creative spaces in Accra. As I witnessed how the conditions of coloniality were shaping the lives of people in Ghana I was reminded of the relevance and urgency of the questions I was asking. I was not saddened when one intern at a video production house flatly told me they were not proud to be Ghanaian. No, on the contrary, I was invigorated to ask myself "how can we be free and how are we freeing ourselves in the here and now?" I was encouraged, and humbled at the same time, by the strong sense of commitment to decoloniality from some of the cultural producers I interviewed. They appeared to devote their work, bodies and lived experiences to the project.

In my many engagements within the Ghanaian creative communities I was being challenged intellectually and politically. Allow me to conclude with a couple of brief examples. First, I recall observing a number of men in these creative spaces experimenting with long hair. Some wore locks, which have become associated with Western moral decadence, often U.S. African American urban life and criminality, particularly illicit drug use. Some of these men would tell me about the discrimination and complaints they endured due to their hair. I admired their bravery, for I also wanted to experiment but I feared the backlash. Indeed, it was not until I returned to the U.S. that I let my hair grow out, which has had my mother complaining every time we talk. Also, during a talk on Fela and women in Accra, I was reminded of the complex lives of our "faves." Kinna Likimani, writer, activist, and daughter of the famed Pan-African feminist

writer Ama Ata Aidoo, argued that for many Ghanaian girls, our society was stealing their time. Unlike boys, girls were burdened with a lot of gendered household chores that took away their time and space to explore, study and experiment. Her poignant observation stayed with me, forcing me to reconsider my relationship as a son to my mother, brother to my sisters and uncle to my nieces. How might I actively contribute to structuring space and time in the household so that girls and women in my family could reclaim their time? Interactions in creative spaces with these courageous cultural producers in many ways contributed to my evolving, embodied, lived decolonial praxis. Just as I returned to Ghana a different person, I was also returning to the U.S. changed by transformative experience in Ghana.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2: Making Music Videos in Postcolonial Ghana

In this chapter, I begin with a brief discussion of literature on music videos and then focus on music video scholarship in Africa. I then examine the music video production process in Ghana. I look at why artists spend time and money shooting music videos and subsequently promoting them. In addition, I focus on the points of tension that arise particularly between directors and artists as they construct worlds within music videos. I also explore the music video production set as a social event where participants come together under specific circumstances to create art that will eventually be circulated publicly. I argue that existing literature in music video has neglected the production set as an important aspect that fundamentally shapes the outcome of this audiovisual form. I identify the video set an important space of creative collaboration for knowledge sharing and co-creation. Thus, in this chapter I attempt to theorize the eventfulness of the music

production shoot. In order to do this, I draw on participant observation of music video shoots; listening sessions and other events; formal interviews with cultural producers; media interviews; behind the scenes footage; and music videos.

Chapter 3: Hiplife Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity

This chapter traces how common-sense ideas of modernity are channeled through hiplife music in Ghana. Specifically, my analysis examines how mainstream hiplife musicians[5] construct an entrepreneurial branded self, which then becomes an index of a modern life. Additionally, my aim is to explore how living in a space defined as underdevelopment (Escobar, 2011) is embodied and performed in order to access the good life. This enables me to understand how success is defined through performance in music videos. I also bring to bear the perspective of fans, to explore their understanding of the performances in music videos.

Chapter 4 Hiplife's Jezebels: Female Images in Popular Ghanaian Music Videos

In this chapter, I focus on the women who make hiplife music videos. I aim to examine ideas about 'modern' Ghanaian women in hiplife music. This chapter explores how the journey of development has constructed notions of modern Ghanaian femininity. For instance, feminine beauty rituals of the "modern African lady" have been regarded as a threat to "African moral fabric" (Hansen, 2004). In this section, I also focus on the jezebel image— a woman who uses her sexuality to procure favors from men— in hiplife music videos. This image has become one of the mainstays of hiplife music. My interest here is in examining the intersection of race and gender in hiplife music videos. Further it speaks to conceptualizations of modern Ghanaian women in hiplife music videos. I draw

[5] I distinguish between commercially successful hiplife musicians and their underground counterparts who struggle for economic security from their music.

on ideas from African Feminism, transnational feminism, Maria Lugones' (2007) work on the modern/colonial gender system and literature that examines gender and race in music videos.

Chapter 5: Towards a Decolonial Aethesis

In this chapter I explore decolonial aetheSis practices employed by hiplife artists and cultural producers. I discuss cultural producers who are committed to cultural activities aimed at cultivating a decolonial aestheSis. To this end, it is in this chapter that I also highlight the politics of possibility (Gibson-Graham, 2006). The question I examine here is: How do cultural producers make decolonial aetheSis? How are these meaning-making activities cultivating new subjectivities? What subjectivities are being produced?

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Desiring Development

In the conclusion, I return to the broad themes in my research. Then I discuss the critical implications of my examination and highlight the politics of possibility. Further, I engage with the ongoing debate in post-development theory on the question of why peoples in "underdeveloped" places remain invested in development discourse.

CHAPTER 2

MAKING MUSIC VIDEOS IN POSTCOLONIAL GHANA

After seeing this poster everywhere (defacing the surfaces of our built environment), I started thinking about the amount of cultural, economic, political and psychological space the church occupies in Ghana.

- Posted on Twitter January 12, 2018

Introduction

Figure 2. 1: Festival of Miracles poster plastered across a wall in Accra, 2018

I was referring to Bishop Charles Agyinasare's church event called the Festival of Miracles. The poster features the prominent Ghanaian bishop holding up walking sticks in one hand and a microphone in the other. The posters' presence was unavoidable, they were plastered everywhere, from the city kiosks to the walls of overpasses. Church posters like the Festival of Miracles are ubiquitous elements across the Accra. Their messages promising success as an instant miracle are often placed side by side with the

indigenous spiritualists promising the same. For instance, Nana Ofisiga asks you to "come for your": "blood money," "liquid money," "sympathetic money," "join up level of protection," "health," "wealth," "mysterious solutions," "lotto numbers" and "for all spiritual solution."

Figure 2. 2: Church posters side by side with a traditional spiritualist's poster announcing his services, Accra, 2017

The posters and my many encounters with street preachers forced me to reflect on how much space – physical, social, economic and psychic – the church in Ghana occupies. When I began my fieldtrip, I encountered a bus preacher in my first trotro ride. On my market trips with my mother, encounters with many street preachers were very common, sometimes it seemed like we bumped into one every hundred meters. To be sure, I was not alone in recognizing the power of the church and its influence in shaping Ghanaianess. Several cultural producers I interviewed perceived that the church was one of our major problems. Indeed, a recent survey of one hundred and four countries,

claimed that Ghana and Georgia were the only two countries in which the young generation were more religious than the old.[6]

The church posters, street preachers and interviews with cultural producers prompted me to reflect on what decolonial praxis would entail. I was becoming convinced that it would have to necessarily mean, amongst other things, reclaiming the space from the church and from the existing social order. After all, as others have noted, Christianization was the hand maiden of colonialization. This concern brings me to why media making is an important way of reclaiming space and shifting the dispositions of power. For my part, meaning making activities simply take up space, physically, emotional, economically etc.

Thus, music making can become a site where the marginalized can engage in meaning making as a decolonial praxis to reclaim space. I recall observing the rapper, Ayat's community festival: there were various church group engaged in prayer sessions while the stage was being set up. When the music started blasting from the speakers the church folks ended their session not long after. This is perhaps an extreme example, but it showed me how the reclamation of space was possible on this concrete level in a community like Madina. Similarly, prominent political cartoonist Bright Ackwerh, splashed a series of posters in some parts of Accra critiquing China's incursion into Africa. This was same theme he addressed in his famous illustration which angered the Chinese embassy in Ghana.[7] It this kind of reclamation that I argue is possible with

[6] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/13/young-more-religious-than-old-in-only-two-countries-in-world

[7] See 'How a lone Ghanaian cartoonist stood up to China.' Retrieved from https://qz.com/africa/1137709/how-a-lone-ghanaian-cartoonist-stood-up-to-china/

meaning making in general but specifically for this project, I am focusing on music videos. Music videos present an opportunity for artists to visualize the worlds they create in their music and invite viewers to also inhabit that space.

Figure 2. 3: Bright Ackwerh's posters plastered under a road flyover, Accra, 2017

In recent years music videos have featured prominently in the Ghanaian music industry. Music videos are mainly used by artistes and record labels to promote their music. On Ghana Television (GTV), the state broadcaster, music videos programs were mainly targeted at young people (Owens, 1995). Shows like Metro TV Advertising Cycle and then Smash TV prominently featured music videos. The evidence of the popularity and increasing use of music videos was signaled by the recent MTN 4syte TV Music Video Awards, 2017. As the only music video awards event in Ghana, it was started in the 2009, it rewards artists and directors of music industry.

In this chapter, I begin with a brief discussion of literature on music videos and then focus on music video scholarship in Africa. I then examine the music video

production process in Ghana. I am interested in how youths, often marginalized, make culture and as such engage in what I call a decolonial praxis of reclaiming space. The reclamation of space makes two moves: it takes back space and in the process creates what bell hooks (1989) calls a "space of radical openness" (p.19). For hooks (1989), this is a space of marginality which is a necessary part of the whole; it is space of radical possibility and resistance. Importantly, she notes, "[it] offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds" (hooks 1989, p.20).

In addition, I focus on the points of tension that arise particularly between directors and artists as they construct worlds within music videos. Here, I draw on Ekdale (2017), adaptation of Tsing's (2005) idea of friction in his work on Kenyan music video production. In regards to directors and artists, I examine: their motivations for making music videos, what constitutes good music, and how a good music video is defined. I contend that examining these tensions reveals a broader operation of dominant ideas about the society including the nature and depiction of success (creative or otherwise), modernity, development and more. For instance, what constitutes a good music video? How are these definitions further enabled and constrained within the context of Ghana's limited video making scene?

I also explore the music video production set as a social event where participants come together under specific circumstances to create art that will eventually be circulated publicly. I argue that existing literature in music video has neglected the production set as an important aspect that fundamentally shapes the outcome of this audiovisual form. I identify the video set as an important space of creative collaboration for knowledge

sharing and co-creation. Thus, in this chapter I attempt to theorize the eventfulness of music production shoot. In order to do this I draw on participant observation of music video shoots; listening sessions and other events; formal interviews with cultural producers; media interviews; behind the scenes footage; and music videos.

Music Videos

Music videos have become one of the most ubiquitous cultural forms in our current media landscape. It combines sound and image and was, initially, only regarded as a promotional tool for record companies but it is now considered an artistic audiovisual medium in its own right (Vernallis 2004, 2013; Korsgaard 2017). For directors, music videos have been a space for experimentation and for musicians it's a platform to not only market their image but to extend their creative expression. Given the evolution of music videos from their pre-televisual through televisual and now post-televisual phase, the old definition of this cultural form as solely a promotional tool does not hold anymore. In fact, Vernallis (2013) has argued that the techniques and styles developed by music video directors and editors have greatly contributed to our current audiovisual aesthetic. Since the advent of MTV in the 1980s music videos have attracted scholarly attention, however the analysis largely focused on the visual. Perhaps this was because it was largely examined within the fields of cinema and television studies (Askew, 2008). Additionally, it tended to conflate MTV with the cultural form itself.

With regards to the history of the music videos, various forerunners have been traced to the early age of cinema. For example, music videos have been traced to silent cinema, and the later, sound films which lead to the development of musicals. It has been

argued, as Korsgaard (2017) noted, similar to silent cinema the music video is also mute. For

> there is no causal link between sound and image in music video (and as both normally lack spoken dialogue). In sound film, it is common for the images and sounds to correspond, meaning that the visual sources producing the sounds we hear are seen on screen at the same time as we hear this sound. In music video, however, the sounds and the images do not necessarily correspond, most of the time they do not. (p.19)

Other precursors to music videos include the jazz film clips of the 1940s called the Soundies and the Scopitone jukebox produced in France in the 1960s (Goodwin 1992). Yet, in the 1980s the cultural form known as music videos began to prominently occupy the space of popular culture in the West. Goodwin (1992) argues that what is significant about music video is that it becomes, in the 1980s, "a routine method for promoting pop singles"(p.30) that was popularized on MTV. Since its introduction in the U.S. in 1981, MTV has been a significant "cultural force" (Jones, 2005) across the media landscape. Music videos would experience their first golden age in the 1980s and later, in the 1990s. As the budgets increased it truly became more of an "auteurist medium" (Korsgaard, 2017 p.18).

The brief history of the precursors to music videos lends credence to Korsgaard's (2017) assertion that what we often perceived as novel or special about the music video can be found in older forms. For he notes, the "music video fundamentally functions through acts of remediation: music video only represents something new to the extent that it reworks the traditions" such as the Soundies and Scopitone (p.24). As a remediated medium, the music video transmits its messages via a combination of sound and images, at times through diegeisis and then through text. Remediation, he suggests, means that music videos enter "into fundamental relations with other media, old as well as new, in

incorporating, transforming, or repurposing their techniques, forms, and aesthetics" (p.6). It is not a unilinear process, it is both "a matter of new media incorporating the features of old media [and] also a matter of old media changing according to the challenges posed by new media" (p.41). To accommodate the immense heterogeneity of this audiovisual medium Vernallis (2013) broadly defines the music video simply "as a relation of sound and image that we recognize as such" (p.11).

Following similar arguments from Vernallis (2013), Korsgaard (2017) notes that music videos should be examined with regards to their relation between the sound and image. For him music videos "represent a specific type of 'audio-vision,' a certain interweaving of sound, images, and words" (p.6). He terms the interaction between the sound and image as the 'musicalization of vision' where the images are responsive elements of music. On the other hand, the music videos are also visualizations of music. Yet, for Korsgaard, the 'musicalization of vision' is one of the defining stylistic aesthetics of music videos. The videos are also experienced through multiple senses, such as, listening and viewing. Culturally, the music video is "between the realm of art and the commercial as well as between popular music and cinema" (p.49). All these lead Korsgaard to suggest that no one element in the music video is privileged, the configuration of the music video ensures that at particular points in time the music can become more important than the images and vice versa.

Also, Vernallis (2013) has argued that music videos have been instrumental in shaping the style of today's digital cinema and important to understanding today's audio-visual turn. For instance, she observes that the "sound effects and dialogue are now shaped alongside composed music into musical phrases" (p.69). Korsgaard (2017) also

points to notions of the "MTV aesthetics" and musical moments in cinema. On the other hand, within the popular music the influence can be discerned from the increasing usage of visual elements in both live and recorded performances.

Beyond their impact on music and digital cinema, music videos have become prominent cultural forms on the internet. Edmond's (2010) notes that in North America, around the early 2000s, as music video budgets were being slashed and production costs rose the music television stations began showing less videos. Consequently, the internet became an important place to circulate and consume music videos. The early success of this cultural form on the internet are the result of the nature of the medium itself – "short, snappy, and self-contained structure"—and the technological development in digital media (p.307). For instance, camera and equipment in postproduction have become more affordable, thus allowing productions cost to fall.

The internet offered the music industry a way to reconfigure the costly promotional music video into a potential vehicle for revenue (Edmond, 2014). Vevo, an integrated syndication hub for music videos, was launched in 2009 as joint venture amongst Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, Abu Dhabi Media Company, and partnering with Google/YouTube. Edmond notes that syndication hubs allow the music industry to "recover licensing payments from sites like YouTube" and "cash-in on the popularity of music videos online without alienating audiences" (p.310). Thus, she points out, this platform provides access to online music videos for free and gives the industry more control over their content and the revenue generation and recovery.

The post-televisual era has caused significant changes in the ways we circulate and consume music videos (Edmond 2014; Korsgaard 2017). This is due to the increased avenues of interaction (sharing, tagging, liking and comments) and the user generated content. Edmond (2014) notes that online music videos are now searchable and can be accessed on demand. Viewers are now freed from following the strict playlist of music television stations. They can now also watch the music video repeatedly, similar to the way they often listen to music. Indeed, on websites like YouTube viewers can create their own playlists and share.

The current post-televisual phase has renewed research interest in music videos which boomed during the 1980s. Writing in the mid-1990s Banks (1996) observed that a number of studies into music videos largely remained at the level of textual analysis. This still holds true today. For him the disproportionate emphasis on textual examination mostly neglected to explore how various social forces shaped the production of music videos. Thus, he adopted a political economic approach to examine music videos where he was concerned with the influence of the record companies who funded the production and MTV (at the time) who exhibited the videos. He looked at how these various actors shaped the content of the videos and operated "as gatekeepers determining which artists are featured" (p.18). His insights align with my concerns in this current project.

Music Videos in Africa

Today, there are numerous music television stations in Africa including MTV Base Africa (launched in 2005); Channel O in South Africa; Trace TV in Nigeria; and in Ghana 4syteTV and Fiesta TV. Music videos are regular features on Ghanaian television stations; programs like Metro TV's Advertising Cycle airs music videos alongside

adverts while GhOne's Rhytmzlive allows viewers to request music videos via twitter. Artists are also uploading their videos directly to YouTube and shunning television stations that sometimes charge them huge amounts of money to display their videos.

Before proceeding, it is worth discussing African video movies because it is one of the direct precursors to the music video production scene in Ghana. In the early 1960s sub-Saharan cinema began to surface, and at approximately that same time decolonization efforts had reached a peak (Murphy, 2000). "Africans began filming Africans" for African audiences who, to a large extent, had been conditioned by cinematic styles of Western cinema. These African filmmakers in the 1960s and 1970s endeavored to construct counter narratives that captured the complexity of contemporary postcolonial African societies with their ever-evolving socio-cultural landscapes, where global forces continuously shaped local tastes and aesthetics. Indeed, in 1975 the conclusion of the second meeting of the Federation of African filmmakers in Algiers made a commitment to present alternative representations of Africa. They insisted "African films should represent Africa from an African point of view, but should also reject commercial, Western film codes" (Murphy, 2000, p.240).

Yet, due to economic crises in the 1980s film celluloid became very expensive, thus in places like Ghana the relatively less expensive video technology was adopted by self-taught filmmakers. As Garritano (2013) observed, these people were "outside of the networks of official cultural production." William Akuffo was a film projectionist while Socrates Safo was training to be an auto mechanic (Haynes, 2007). Many started off as entrepreneurs who imported and exhibited pirated foreign films and television shows. Later, they would transition to making their own films. At the same time the state had

decreased its support of and control over the filmmaking process. Yet, these new filmmakers would attract hostility from the official establishment of Ghanaian filmmaking. Their critics regarded their movies as embarrassments because of the low technical quality and their representation of Ghanaian life dominated by juju and witchcraft.

One of the first feature films, Zinabu (1987), directed by William Akuffo ignited "the video boom." It was shot on a VHS home video camera (Garritano, 2013). A decade later, the local video movie output was around four English language movies in Ghana per month and two decades later it was estimated that six were released per week, one in English and five in Akan. The video production operated and flourished in the spaces of informality outside the official filmmaking establishments (Garritano 2013; Haynes 2003). African video movie scholarship has largely ignored the booming music video scene that relies on televisual and post-televisual technologies for circulation. The lesson African video movies provide is how self-taught filmmakers made films by savvy navigation of the conditions of economic crises with very little state support. It also highlights the continuities of video making outside the official Ghana filmmaking establishments.

Generally, the scholarship on African music videos are few and far between. Indeed, even the limited studies in hiplife have not given much attention to music videos. For instance, they only make limited appearances in the work of Shipley (2012) and Osumare (2012). Nevertheless, several African music video studies have been interested in examining identity negotiation amongst various genres (Dokotum, 2016; Kidula 2011; Schultz, 2001 and Mungai 2008). Interestingly, other studies have focused on East

African music (Kidula 2011; Mungai 2008; Askew, 2009; Dokotum, 2016; Ekdale 2017) except for Schultz's (2001) examination of Malian women singers on broadcast television. Collectively, these studies have examined music videos in their televisual and post-televisual phases.

The limited scholarship on African music videos also means that this ubiquitous contemporary medium is under theorized. However, Okaka Opio Dokotum (2016) offers a useful theoretical discussion in her critical examination of northern Ugandan Acholi music videos. Particularly about how the LRA war produced a young post-war generation of artists as they attempt to deal with the trauma of war and the reconstruction of peace. For Dokotum, the Acholi music videos have become new cultural vehicles in "which the festering wounds of LRA atrocities are exposed for treatment using a disjunctured artistic form that borders on schizophrenia" (p.230). To produce the video, "memories and montage of war images are superimposed over brisk, often 'sexy', dancers and euphoric entertainment to create a complex multilayered visual ordering of shots which balance trauma and pleasure" (p.217). Adopting a postmodernist frame, Dokotum (2016) calls this the "schizophrenic aesthetics."A term she uses symbolically to refer to "the tension and clash between words, sound, and images and how agency is articulated to expose the raw pain and trauma of postcolonial Africa through entertainment" (p.217).

For Dokotum (2016) the music video form itself possesses a schizophrenic quality that helps display the "urgency, pain, disjuncture and emotional fragmentation of the people and of their social world in the context of entertainment" (p.217). The clash amongst words, sound and images— "audiologovisual phenomenon"—also binds together the different concepts, sounds and image. To be sure, unlike the clinical notion

of schizophrenia, which they describe as pain without pleasure, this symbolic formulation is used "to explain the treatment of traumatic experiences as entertainment and the schizophrenic formal apparatus that transports and conveys this pain in the form of the pleasure of entertainment" (p.217). Here, I find the idea of exposing wounds to be a useful theoretical framework, as one can observe linkages between the traumas caused through war and colonialization with how meaning making practices such as music videos present opportunities for healing (see chapter 5). In other words, cultural production as a vehicle for healing is mediated through the visible representation of trauma in an entertaining, potentially cathartic, way.

Further, within the limited scholarship on African music videos, attention has been paid to the intersection of global and local meaning making practices (Schultz, 2008; Ekdale 2017). Askew (2009) suggested that early inspiration for Tanzanian music videos were partly from Bollywood and Congolese pop music. This shifts the common idea that situated U.S. MTV as the primary stylistic influence for music videos in non-western countries. In many ways, these studies were looking at practices in the production of locality— identities and space— at various levels from national to communal. For instance, Ekdale's (2017) study was interested in how transcultural exchanges – not just global and local but local and local- shaped the production of locality. For him global imaginaries produced "hybrid subjectivities," who were then involved in the cultural production of creating locality (p.213).

For Mbugua wa Mungai (2008), the cheaply produced music video compact discs (VCD) offered insight into self-representations and how they produced discourses that challenged conventional ideas around Kenyan national and personal identity. He argued

that through the medium of VCD Kenyan musicians were also deconstructing the misrepresentation of Africa as a space of negation "by placing themselves and other 'ordinary' persons (hawkers, shopkeepers, matatu drivers and bar tenders amongst others) as central performers in their VCDs" (p.62). Also, he observed that the video recordings produced in Nairobi's River Road were difficult to police and this enabled musicians to "cater for the tastes and desires of ethnic constituencies in ways that subvert the official discourse of a united Kenya"(p.68). For my part, development discourse is very much part of global imaginaries of hybrid local identities which shapes aspirations around questions of social transformation in Africa. I maintain that the production of a particular kinds of localities, especially in the global south, has always been about maintaining particular global arrangements that largely serve Euro-American interests.

In similar examinations of global-local interplay, Shultz's (2001) work shows that women spectators' interpretation of the pop songs contributed to ideas of the "construction of a "modern yet moral" Malian woman" (p.365). Ideas of cosmopolitanism were transmitted particularly through the fashion style of the women singers. In one example she suggests that "what made the singer so attractive in the eyes of these young women was that she was adorned with 'things of the new times' or 'things of the times of the whites'" (p.360). The singers were able to use the audiovisual media to display a cosmopolitan aesthetic that advanced the contradictory notion of "Malian morality (p.366). Indeed, through heightened visibility, the medium afforded a representation of local identities and spaces as being shaped via transcultural exchanges. These were most visible, for instance, through the display of global consumer symbols.

Central to all these various music video studies is their concern about the importance of the audiovisual form in contemporary African life, a medium of the modern times. Mungai (2008) points out that VCDs enabled the older generation of Kenyan musicians to remake their music into audiovisual form. The older artists employed VCD's to insert themselves into today's visually saturated world and offer younger audiences appealing content suited for today's media ecology. At the same time contemporary musicians took songs of deceased musicians, remixed and re-issued their music in the VCD form. Here, he notes that we can think of remixing "as a model of inter-generational musical collaborations" (p.61-62). Additionally, like the internet now, the music VCDs allowed artists, hitherto unable to access mainstream platforms, to circulate their music and images (p.63).

Methodologically, aside from the usual textual analysis, these limited number of music video studies have been examined from a variety of approaches. Dorothea E. Schultz (2001) study of popular Malian singers adopted an audience ethnographic approach as she conducted participant observations with women and girls viewing music videos. She captured their spontaneous expressions, verbal and non-verbal and judgements as they watched (p.357). The women's commentary indicated that songs offered a moral lesson through the lyrics, the background imagery, the choreography of the performer and their fashion aesthetics. Ekdale (2017) intervieweddirectors and DJs to examine the Kenyan music video industry. He also studied YouTube comments to explore the reception of the videos. His cultural production approach closely resembles the approach I adopt in this project. However, his study and Mungai's (2008), both from East Africa were largely silent on the audio part of this audiovisual media. On the other

hand, Kidula's (2011) work on gospel music videos offered a textual analysis on both the musical and visual elements in the video but did not examine the relationship between the two. In this project I mainly focus on the visuality, and at times, its relationship to the music but I will also briefly touch on the musicality of the videos.

Music Video Scene in Ghana

Figure 2. 4: Director T on set manuevering camera on self-made dolly, Accra, 2017

The burgeoning music video production scene has offered creative job opportunities to young people who may otherwise have remained unemployed. The directors I interviewed came from different backgrounds: filmmaking, advertising, fashion, graphic design, architecture, sound engineering and some were musicians who had picked up music video making. All had tertiary education except for two; one had finished senior high school while the other dropped out of high school. About half of the directors I interviewed had training in filmmaking while the other half were self-taught.

Some had worked with directors and learned on the job: Prince Dovlo with Pascal Aka, a filmmaker trained in Canada; Hafiz with Nana Asihene; and Babs Direction with Director OJ. The self-taught directors relied on YouTube videos and began shooting videos for, mostly, unknown artists or their musician friends.

Generally, directors often end up playing multiple roles in the production process: cinematography, editing, styling, art design and producing. However, the more established directors have a handful of permanent staff and they often contract freelancers to do work like fly drones and cinematography. While some directors I interviewed had only shot a handful of videos others had worked on so many they had lost count. For instance, Prince Dovlo estimates he has shot about six hundred videos.

Within the Ghanaian music video scene, the jobs are highly gendered; cinematographers and directors tended to be men while women were usually the talent (models and dancers) and make-up artists. All the commercially active music video directors I interviewed were men. I did interview two women who had directed music videos before, one had shot a single video and the other had yet to shoot a commercial video. However, the film industry features some of the prominent directors who are women, Shirley Frimpong Manso and Leila Djansi. Documentary filmmaker, Anita Afonu, informed me that out of her graduating class from the National Film and Television Institute she is the only woman still pursuing filmmaking. She suggests that after film school the women graduates often get married and have children. This makes the precarious filmmaking work less attractive to them and their families.

The absence of women music video makers and an examination of music videos and the production process reveals how videos are mainly directed towards a straight male audience. One way to explain this is that the fact that both hiplife music and the music video scene are dominated by men. Indeed, the music video scene is both dominated by men behind the camera and at the conceptual phase of video production. One director also pointed out that the themes of the songs, particularly those with love interests would require casting women carefully (see chapter 4).

Figure 2. 5: Make- up artists prepares artist on set, Aburi, 2017

Generally, in the music video scene, new upcoming cultural producers are often collaborating to build portfolios with hopes of securing future (better) paying gigs. For instance, a model might want to be featured in the music video to improve her chances of securing paying project later. Conversely, an upcoming director might shoot for free with a well-known artist or for a popular song so they can gain professional visibility. However, these collaborations can be exploitative. Sometimes, successful artists use their

celebrity to illicit unpaid labor from upcoming models, dancers and directors. Sarkodie, a successful rapper, came under fire on Twitter when he asked people to participate in his video for "exposure" (see chapter 3). Incidentally, the video went on to win the overall best music video award at the 2017 4Syte Music Video Awards. Perhaps, cultural producers are willing to participate in these unfair/unequal collaborations because it appears that career advancement means working with the next top artist or project. To compound this, formal contracts are not always signed in music video productions. As one director noted, in "2016 I was using more of my contracts it's only a few who accept that system…When you give [artists] a concept and you add contract they will not come again."

One striking observation about the contemporary video making in Ghana is the use of social media. Directors employed social media for recruiting talent (especially women models from Instagram); creating a platform for sharing information amongst cast and crew of a project at hand; building their brand; and learning. Babs Direction, a director, once sent images from his ongoing project to Matt Alonzo, a prominent U.S. music video director, who responded with some feedback. A model organizer informed me she uses Whats App groups to share casting calls and to manage a team of models; essentially creating a virtual agency. Makeup artists, models and dancers also capture behind the scenes images of themselves and their work that they share online for self-promotion particularly when they work with well-known artists. Artists and directors, apart from using Twitter and Facebook, also use the Whats App broadcast function to send out short trailers of their music videos. Artists have also thrown video launch parties

to premier and create ‘hype’ for their new videos. Sometimes, the launch parties can come with an entrance fee to create instant, tangible, revenue.

Another promotional vehicle often used by artists is YouTube. They upload their video on this popular platform primarily because of the social and economic barriers to accessing television platforms. (Sometimes directors will help with the promotion by connecting the artists to their network of people in television, radio and blogosphere.) YouTube allows content creators greater agency over the final product that gets released to the public; traditional stations can ask for edits to be done before the videos will be aired or even reject them outright without any reason. At times, the TV stations will even do their own editing, like the censorship of vulgarity. One director informed me how he was asked to remove a sexually suggestive scene so that the video could be aired before 8:00pm. In another case, a director complained about image quality. He claimed that some of the Ghanaian television stations compressed his videos from 4k to 360p even though, he argued, they could transmit in 720p. Vernallis (2013) offers a useful observation here. She notes that in North America the challenges record labels faced getting their videos to play on MTV impacted resultant music videos as they were being “consciously or unconsciously,” made to fit the standards of the committees who vetted the videos. Are artists and directors in Ghana music video making being shaped by the demands of the television stations? Perhaps, in this post-televisual phase this does not hold as much.

Television stations may also ask artists to pay for monthly packages to have their videos air a guaranteed number of times. As of 2017, the cost can be as high as Ghs 3000

a month and the deal may include interviews.[8] While some stations formally admit they do not charge, the artists informed me that they had to grease the palms of the people responsible for putting the video on the station's playlist. However, directly posting videos online bypasses these institutional barriers of the television stations. Ironically, when it gains popularity on the internet the stations might then air it for free. That is why, for instance, popular hiplife artists are not typically required to pay for play.

Most hiplife music videos are shot in urban locations. Unsurprising, this is, after all, an urban originating genre, a genre of the "modernity." For Babs Direction, locations make up 50% of a music video, and for him, that is what makes them important. He argues that "Ghanaians think Ghana is only Accra …." In my observations, it was obvious that studio shoots were easier to manage since the directors have control over the space and have less interference from community members.[9]

At times, shooting at certain locations invited forms of harassment from community folks who want money or who found the video making activity to be a nuisance. I was told of an incident where a community member slapped someone on a set. To keep the community from interfering money was usually offered. As one director recounts an experience "just like three weeks ago I shoot some short film for Jamestown and it was so smooth…. I think say cos den we dey hold money. cos my cousin …dey hold money, if anybody come ah den he give am Ghs 20...so it's like legit people started coming out to come and get money." He eventually had to tell his cousin to stop freely distributing the money in that manner. In this way music videos have also become a small

[8] As of July 2017, the exchange rate was $1 to Ghs 4.38
[9] I spoke to Ibam a studio manager for Breakthrough Studios; he informed that they charge Ghs 800 per day. The studio has been running for two years and they have shot about 100 videos.

source of income for community folks who live around the popular spaces that are often used for shoots.

In fact, Jamestown, a low-income suburb in Accra, has become symbolic of this new phenomenon ever since it became a popular backdrop for music video production and the location of the Chale Wote Street Art Festival. The graffiti art, left after the festival, have become popular backgrounds for music videos. Unfortunately, the graffiti artists are rarely credited in the music videos. Bright Ackwerh was unhappy when his graffiti was featured in Bisa Kdei's video shot by Prince Dovlo. Recently, Babs shot a video there with Juls and Adunkele gold. International artists have also used Jamestown as the location for their videos; they include artists like Jhus (UK), Reggie and Bollie (UK) and Falz (Nigeria). Corporations have also taken advantage of the cultural vibe in Jamestown and shot adverts there too. What has happened in Jamestown reflects a sentiment one director observed. In commenting on Law and Order being shot in New York, he asked "how do cities get iconic? Because the artists create worlds within those cities." The creative activities in Jamestown have been etched into the popular consciousness of the Ghanaian cultural imaginary.

The nature and layout of the location will likely determine when the shoot can occur. A lot music video production occurs during weekend, as Hafiz, a director at Digital Creative Media, points out that "Saturday's are our market days." According to him, "Saturdays and Sundays and sometimes Fridays" are when they can have the "space" to shoot. For instance, the use of the facilities of corporate entities. On Sundays, the city is relatively quiet, and it is a good time to shoot outdoors especially around the city center. To that end, due to the burgeoning media making activities, some prominent

locations for video and photography now display the cost structure at the entrance. For instance, the botanical gardens at Legon which used to be free now have fixed rates mounted at the entrance. The rates are as follows: Photo Shoot – Ghs 170; Model Photo Shoot – Ghs 80; Video Shoot (4 hrs) - Ghs 600; Video Shoot (8 hrs) - Ghs 1000.[10]

Making a Good Music Video: Competing Definitions

A snapshot of the music video production process is as follows: the artist creates a few songs and then decides which one deserves a video; they contact the director who matches their aesthetic vision for the song; the director produces a treatment with a budget; if the concept is liked part payment will be made; location scouting and other pre-production activities are done; the video is shot and edited then delivered to the artist who then finds ways to promote it.

Ghanaian artists employ directors to shoot music videos for several reasons. For directors and artists the greater motivations for making music videos typically converge around the desire to create art and build a brand for economic and social success. However, differing ideas about what constitutes creative success impacts how both groups engage in this meaning making practice. Invariably definitions of a good music video are intertwined with broader imperatives of the society. For instance, how the performance of success speaks to notions of what it means to live the good life in Ghana (see chapter 3).

First let's consider why artists make music videos. Of course, one of the primary reasons is to promote their music and image. As one hiphop artist noted:

[10] See Legon Botanical Gardens. Retrieved from https://legonbotanicalgardens.com/rates/

> To push your brand for the mileage cos the visibility counts, radio is not a big fan of hiphop or rap music in general. It supports more dance…music, hiplife, gospel and stuff, so as a hiphop artist or as a rapper it's more important to put your face out there and put in the extra work of a music video as compared to a normal hiplife guy who can just do a track and have radio air play for free. So the visibility is the main factor (Hiphop artist, 2015)

Mena, another artist, echoed a similar comment, noting that "visuals go further than audio." For these artists, given the relative inattention to their brand of music, they believed their music videos would help them attract attention across the internet to build a fan base. In fact, fans may also implore the artists to shoot a music video. A recent example was calls on Twitter for Wanlov to make a Ghanaian version of Childish Gambino's viral music video, "This is America" following the success of Nigerian rapper, Falz's, remake called, "This is Nigeria." Wanlov eventually recorded the song, and admonished fans for ignoring all his past songs critiquing the state of Ghana and asked them who would pay for the music video. He states "kubolor wot of da video? /mek Mutombo shoot am/...who go pay am?"

Another hiplife artist suggests that shooting music videos is driven by three broad considerations: "an extension of the creative process"; "best advertisement…for your music and for who you are and what you represent"; and for "new artists" particularly the videos are for "vanity." He argues that people do not seem to

> realize that being popular or being famous is not what pays the bills [yet] they want music videos to let people see and know who they are. The reality of whether that actually helps them or not depends on each artist.

One director expressed a similar point noting that the music videos were about "hype." He argues, "it's a Ghanaian …male culture to make yourself look rich for the [women]." He claimed, it reflected the culture of "women wanting money from men and men [pretending] that they have it." Here, the notion of conspicuous consumption underlies

ideas around what particularly constitutes male success and how artists, often men, draw on the medium often for these types of representation (see chapter 3).

For a number of directors I talked to making music videos was a transitional phase that allowed them to raise some money; experiment; build their brand; and develop a portfolio so that they could chase commercials or eventually make a movie. Recently, Prince Dovlo, a prolific music video director, who started while in the university released the movie titled "Purple Movie" (2016). It is a musical that features well-known artists including Pappy Kojo, Sister Debbie and her brother Wanlov the Kubolor. I had the opportunity of observing Fofo Gavua, Canadian trained filmmaker and music video director, make his first feature film titled, "Lucky" (2018). Hafiz informed me that he initially wanted to do commercials but he needed to build a portfolio and look professional. He claimed, "to go corporate you need to look corporate."

Some directors were also interested in helping develop talent and industry even at a personal cost so they invested their time and skill, and resources in artists. This was true for directors like Babs Direction, Fofo Gavua, Mutomobo and Ibam. Mutomobo has been doing music videos to mainly help upcoming artists while fine-tuning his skills as a cinematographer, director and editor. He noted, "… one of my main reasons why I started shooting videos, why I started recording my own stuff was also to help people who can't pay huge sums to get their own music videos and all." Ibam recalled how he helped an artist from the Northern Region, a place marginalized in Ghanaian society. The artist could not afford the budget for the shoot yet Ibam found ways to make it work by borrowing equipment from friends and supporting the shoot with his own money.

At times, upcoming directors are interested in working with popular artists or making a video for a popular song in order to build a portfolio and then leverage the popularity of the song and the celebrity to gain personal visibility. For instance, Babs Direction's work with Darkovibes; Hafiz's collaboration with EL; and Henry KD's project with Obaapa Christy, a gospel artist. In all these instances, the directors reached out to the artists. In fact for Henry KD this was his first music video and Obaapa Christy would show up to the shoot four hours late. Tardiness is notorious within the Ghanaian music video scene. In these kinds of collaborations, the downside for some directors, especially upcoming ones, is that the artist may never publish the video even if it is shot for free. Thus, the reward for their free creative labor, the public circulation and attention for their work, is not reaped.

Other times, directors have concepts they want to execute and they may collaborate with artists who have the music and money to fund their creative experiments. They may do the project at production cost and their reward is the execution of their project, the professionalization, and the music video for the portfolio. Typically, the director will have creative autonomy. For instance, David, director at North Productions, is able to execute multi day shoots and creative work due to his collaboration with artists like Sarkodie. Their work with top artists ensures that their videos get promoted widely. Sarkodie may also recommend them to other top artists. In this way, their celebrity power as video directors grows and then in turn it becomes prestigious for artists to shoot with them. Directors can also become celebrities in their own right; their work may get attention due to their established reputation within the industry regardless of its artistic merit.

Good Music

The song initiates the encounter between the artist and director, and of course other cultural producers within the music video production scene. What constitutes good music becomes a competing frame that can lead to a successful creative collaboration. However, sometimes the creative vision of these artists is inhibited by commercial and economic realities. But first the artist must decide what song to shoot a video for since music videos are expensive investments and artists usually pay out of pocket, they may even resort to raising money online. An example of this is Ayat selling merchandise like shirts or artists featuring product placements to help pay for their videos.

To that end, the following factors are often considered when selecting a song: the commercial viability of the song; fan requests for a video; low budget or free offers from directors to shoot a song. One artist informed me,

> I want to get to the point where if the song deserves a video we will shoot it. But it's a job and it's expensive. So you have to balance between ambitions of how to promote the music and ambitions of what would make a great video.

This same artist was quick to point out a phenomenon I had also observed, he claims,

> I mean, this day and age if you have a song that is going to be a smash, you either shoot the video for it early or don't shoot one at all. Cos some songs can become so big the video will always be disappointing.

Here, this assertion makes clear that there is a tendency for the popularity of the song and its circulation, parodies and dance videos to overshadow the music video. Additionally, since the song is already circulating in visual form for free there is less incentive to invest in an expensive video. The artist used Fuses' video, "Antenna" (2012), as an example; the official video seemed lackluster in the face of the initial buzz generated by the fan videos.

The song typically forms the basis for conceptualizing the music videos. As David, the director from North Productions, noted, "usually we listen to the song we get motivated draw some inspirations from the song, [and] write a treatment." Another director emphasizes the importance of the music "…ideally I would love to work with artists who… seduce my imagination rather than music that you can't really do anything with because I think sometimes some of the music…, you …really can't work [with]." In distinguishing a film from music video, one director pointed out the role of the song: "with a music video the storyline has already been written, the essence of the video has already been written…so the characters are already there. The artist is already a character …from the storyline..."

In continuing with the metaphor, the directors desire to work with a good script that not only inspires creativity but allows them to appreciate their brand. Directors told me that they typically accepted projects in which they liked the music. These claims, I must add, were often made by the more established directors. Nonetheless, it is in the interest of the artist to come up with 'good' songs because often it really engenders creative collaborations not only with directors but dancers, models etc. For instance, Fofo Gavua a director, upon hearing Worlasi's songs, sends out a tweet saying he wanted to work with him. Eventually, Worlasi's manager contacted him and this led to the making of "One Life" (2016) featuring Sena Dagadu at a cost below the director's conventional budget.

It is also in the director's interest to shoot songs that are popular or "good" since that can also affect the popularity of the video. Also, a director may not want his name associated with a particular song. A director informed me that he does not work on songs

that do not align with his morality; in this case, he does not tolerate vulgarity. Wanlov the Kubolor, a musician turned director, even requests a payment to listen to the music before he even decides whether to work on the video. He claims people make you listen to bad music. His criteria for good music included the following: “original, funny, having a social message, and being a good song, well made.” For instance, he has turned down folks who were faking accents. The point to underscore here is that contested ideas about what constitutes a good song becomes integral to getting a music video made in the first place or at least creating the opportunity to work with a particular director, often the well-known ones.

A Good Music Video

Within the context of Ghanaian music video production, three things typically occur at the conceptualization phase: directors are given the creative freedom to work, there is some collaboration to co-create the concept or the artist may come up with the entire concept for the shoot. This phase is one of the prominent areas of contention between artists and directors. These areas of contention are what Ekdale (2017), calls creative friction between the directors and artists based on his work in the Kenyan music video scene. In his study, collaboration is understood through Tsing’s idea of “differences within common cause (p. 246)” (cited in Ekdale, 2017 p.217). These cultural producers are interested in the creation of a successful music video but their ideas of success may diverge. For Ekdale (2017) the director’s global imaginary makes them see the music video as a global cultural form that can be experimental but local. While the directors want to be artistic they also want to attract commercial customers. On the other hand, the artists view themselves as players in the “global community of musicians who must

project marketable identities that are both locally rooted and internationally aspirational" (p.217-p.218). Thus, the artists employ music videos to market their brands "to local and supralocal power brokers, such as managers, concert promoters, and corporate sponsors" (p.217-p.218).

In Banks' (1996) study he observes similar creative tensions as video directors and producers claimed that the record labels were usually not supportive of original creative concepts and rather preferred the standard conventional videos that may have a higher chance of airing on music television. Twelve years later, Mako Fitts' (2008) study in the U.S. reveals similar concerns. She observes a tension between "artistic freedom of expression and the mechanical production of the "booty video" formula that saturates music video programming and is a template for rap videos" (p. 230). This happens within the context in which the various cultural producers struggle for power and control.

Here, I suggest that these tensions between artists and directors also reveal competing frames about the representation of gender, success and so on. To be sure, it is in making culture that these categories are activated, reworked, contested and explored as "as resources and limiters in how we think and act" (Henderson, 2012, p.3). The contentions about creative success is evident, for instance, in the practice where directors refuse to attach their names to projects they work on. In Lord Paper's "Awurama" (2016), a controversial sexually explicit video, the director told me he did not put his name on it because he feared it would harm his brand.

Artists often make significant aesthetic decisions the moment they decide on which director they want to work with. More to the point, after they choose what song to shoot a video for they scout for directors often based on aesthetic vision they have that

matches the stylistic approach of the potential director. In this way, the artists and their management team have determined the creative direction even before the song is sent to the director. As one artist informed me,

> …personally, I have a bunch of directors that I shortlist for my projects depending on the feel of the song, the kind of look I am going for. I know what kind of director to go for. If I am going for something that has a classic and vintage look, I'd [go] for maybe Nana Asihene. If I want something that is more fluorescent and flashier and out there I might go for Pascal Aka. If I want somebody I can work with that I can control and be more part of the process I'll go for PK.

Here we observe that it is not only the stylistic direction of the director but also the level of involvement the artist wants in the creative process that informs their choice. Sometimes the artists also shop around for ideas from different directors. One hiphop artist noted, "I throw the song out there and I find which director finds the best concept that I am willing to work with." Subsequently, the treatment is submitted with a budget. The concepts are usually generated for free but some video production houses make the artist sign a non-disclosure agreement so that they cannot use their work. If the treatment is not selected, according to David from North production, it is not a total loss since this becomes treatment that may be applied to a future project.

Some artists are heavily involved in the conceptualization of their videos. One hiphop artist told me:

> …directors like to cut you off. They want to come on set, 'they're the boss and rap your song let me direct my video,' but that's not always the right way. Me, I feel like my input is needed because it's my video. I know [how] ...I want it to come out... So, I feel like, at least, I need some access in the creative process of shooting my video.

This artist informed me that he typically generates the concepts for most of his videos, about "50% or more" which also includes casting. Similarly, Ayat, for instance, is heavily involved in the production of his videos. For his songs, "I don't know" (2016)

and “Kudi” (2017) he drafted the concept and then sent it to the directors. In the production of “I don’t know you,” he used a Facebook post to invite fans to be extras in the shoot while telling them about the dress code, location, time and props they can bring, like cars and bikes. He informs me that several people showed up and he could not say how many, exactly. Mena, a rapper, for instance, even edits his own videos. One is also reminded of the U.S. rapper, Kendrick Lamar and Dave Free also known as The Little Homies. They have collaborated with Dave Meyers to make their music videos. Decidedly, in Ghana the heavy involvement of artists in the music video production helps cut costs.

To generate the treatment, the directors noted that they will typically listen to the song multiple times trying to create a concept. Some will talk to the artist to derive the emotional motivation for the song and ask them what ideas they might have in mind already.

One director’s approach to music videos stood out:

> I like to think about the entire marketing plan: on the branding ...as a whole as opposed to just ... [making] the video for just the song. I look at the whole marketing plan, how long has the song been released, when the video is going to be released from when the song has been released. Is it going to be released with the song at the same time? Or the video is going to be released after that? Or video is going to be released before? I mean what kind of videos the artists has done before that? I mean all those things affect the type of video, the storyline, the mood of it all together.

For this director, he factors in the overall promotional strategy of the artist into the conceptual process. The creative approach is hinged directly on marketing considerations and perhaps this may reduce the already limited space for creative innovation. However, he did note that the music in many ways has already determined “concept creation, 20%

has already been done or 30% or more through the song, and through the artist image and branding." In this case, the video, as understood by this director, follows the original objective of this cultural form; to market the song and the artists. Not many directors informed me that they took these things into consideration.

Considering the burgeoning video space, there are very limited infrastructure and institutional support for filmmaking in Ghana. David, a director at North Production, recognizes this, thus conceptually he states,

> …the thing is you're living in Africa, you're living in Ghana and their certain ideas you have and you cannot create them…We don't have such resources, so the ideas we usually come up with are usually ideas that can be easily executed in our environment rather than trying to write something which is insane and ...you can't actually do it or bring it life in a country like this.

On this note, it is worth pointing out that several Ghanaian artists fly to countries like South Africa, UK, U.S. and Dubai to shoot videos. Conceptually, the music video is limited by the available resources of the artists and what is available in Ghana.

Another director observes, "usually when I have the song I sort of watch the song in my mind in terms of how I know the typical Ghanaian artists would want the video to look like versus what— because my mind usually goes very wild in terms of the visuals that— I would rather want to shoot." He tries to balance the artist's expectations, which are usually not creatively daring, with his own desire for creative originality. He later adds that this creates tensions for those "who really are creative." The artist may not trust that your concept will not negatively affect their image and this reduces the creative possibilities of the collaboration. For this director, this makes being a music video director in Ghana "a very hectic job." David shares similar sentiments, "most of these

artists are not really open minded to creative stuff. They really want to get things going for the masses so they actually understand their market better than us."

David further explains how they get around the creative differences with the artists,

> usually it's a drive ...we are lucky enough to have artists that are more open minded because the driving force is really not the money. It's really about the idea, is about just explaining the idea to them in the most simple term for them to really understand and see how best you can bring it to light.

For David it is important they get a good "vibe" with the client, thus they are selective with projects they undertake. Fofo Gavua, who had created music videos in Canada told me the first time they were able to go "fully artistic" for a music video was with Worlasi's "One life" (2016) featuring Sena Dagadu. Bear in mind, Fofo and his team have worked on videos in Canada, costing $30,000 Canadian. For him, the making of "One life" (2016) "was an extreme passion project" and it was their first official video in Ghana. Fofo with a training in filmmaking approaches all his videos as films with a "beginning, middle and end."

Some directors have turned down jobs because the conceptual demands from artists did not align with their politics and creative style. Anita Afonu, a documentary filmmaker who is yet to shoot a music video commercially, informed me that she has rejected offers by hiplife artists. She notes, "as a woman filmmaker I am a lot more conscious about ...representation." She suggests that the artists are often interested in imitating because they would always give her concepts of "what they … saw on MTV or on BET." She adds, "I find it difficult trying to direct a bunch of women to dance in a certain way. Because that is not what I stand for...I would like to tell a very good story with the music." She argues that these artists do not appear to be interested in telling

stories: they desire stunning visuals, slow motions shots and scantily clad women dancing provocatively. She observes that the dancing tends to be the main focus but it is done in an objectified way, she notes "I am against the objectification...the objectification can be done if it there is a back story. But too many times…it's just women dancing being very sexual and it doesn't go beyond. That's just what it is." She informed me that she has never been approached by a woman artist.

Strikingly, directors have observed that artists are usually invested in the type of camera that will be employed for a shoot. These artists often think the artistic value of the music video resides in the technical quality of the graphics. One director argued, "artists have money for cameras but they don't have money for directors for some reason. Basically, if you tell [them] that you'll shoot with this camera that's when they'll see value in it." For instance, one director has factored this perception into the conceptualization stage. He notes,

> I show them different visual references from what I've done,…to give them an idea of the particular camera that might be able to [capture] the texture that they are looking for and also I do that so that they understand that if they use this camera this is the latitude I have in terms of editing it to get as close to what they want so that they know what they are getting for their money.

Due to the value placed on video equipment by artists, some of directors have even reorganized their budget in such a manner to shift the cost onto the equipment. Camera equipment used for shoots range from the iPhone to the expensive Red Camera which, depending on the model, rental cost can be as much as Ghs 2000 per day. Usually, the staff member from the rental company accompanies these expensive cameras to shoot to keep an eye on them. (One person from the rental service I talked to informed me that their Red camera goes out almost every day specifically for music video shoots.) Henry

KD states, "…initially I was heading my budget with cost of equipment and then cost of labor and all those things but I realized they were not paying attention to that." To cut cost the artists would take things out they perceived they could handle. For example, securing locations and casting. Thus, he adopted a new strategy where he asks artists to select from a list of "cinematic cameras" they would like employed in their shoot. Based on their selection, Henry KD gives them a fixed quote. He states:

> …let's say if you should choose Red Scarlet or Red Epic and then the budget is like 8000. You know that 8000 is going to cover anything that I'll need to shoot. There are sub sub sub things within the budget. It's only the camera that is heading the budget now.

As noted, the artists' focus on equipment reflects the value they ascribe to glossy image quality over conceptual innovation.

Budgeting bears heavy on the concept; it is the single most important constrain within music video production process. Narrative driven videos were usually less common because they cost more. They are more complex and may require multiple day shoots consequently increasing the cost of equipment hiring. Directors argued that artists have high conceptual expectations that are not usually matched with appropriates budgets. Director Henry KD also notes, "…these guys they want something good but they don't put in what they want in the budget ...the budget is so low but then their expectations are so high."

The budget will affect the choice of director; the duration of the shoot; whether it is indoors or outdoors; the choice of location; and sometimes even the skin color of lead (woman) model (see chapter 4). Some directors have stopped shooting music videos all together, in part due to the budgetary challenges. Alex Wondergem a multimedia artists

states, “I didn’t want to do that forever because it was mundane. It was pretty tedious ...especially when people just don’t allow the flow and they want something a certain way without a budget. I’m like ‘guy you know we have to make do.’” Fofo Gavua suggests that when the artists do spend more money on a video they tend to want that to reflect in the images in the form of conspicuous consumption (see chapter 3). He adds, they may “want us to do a video in a big house.” For him, the budget must be geared towards creative innovation and originality.

Against the backdrop of limited budgets, sometimes bartering becomes the means of transaction. To advertise his clothing line Alex Wondergem offered to shoot a video for an artist whose song he wanted to use. He notes, the artist needed “the visuals and I needed the song ...” In an opposite transaction, Alex gets a music video for a beat he gave to Wanlov. He argues,

> I’m starting to realize ...I mean more emphasis on the trading now. It’s nice to see that because it’s a form of currency, you know and ideally, I think the world would be better if we worked of trades as opposed the money being in the middle. Cos…money buys anything in that sense.

For him the talent for talent trade becomes a way of encouraging creative collaboration in a cash strapped Ghanaian creative space.

To return to my main argument in this section, the differing motivations for making music videos shape the competing frames for what constitutes a good music video. While both directors and artists are interested in building a brand to secure economic success, there are diverging ideas about what creative success means. For instance, as noted above, creative success for some artists means high quality images captured by advanced expensive cameras while for the director it means originality and

conceptual sophistication. On the latter point, artists have expressed concerns that their audiences may not understand complex concepts. For them, this type of misunderstanding could be described as a form of creative failure thus they opted for more familiar formulaic type of videos like the 'booty videos' with fancy cars (see chapter 3). Of course, for several artists the music video is primarily a tool for advertising. In fact, a number of directors are aware of this but attempted to push the creative envelope to experiment and attain creative success. Indeed, a recurring observation from directors and some artists about the state of the Ghanaian music video scene centered on this: while there has been an improvement in technical quality of the images, conceptually the music videos remain weak.

Let me conclude this section with a keen anecdote of the tension between artists and directors. The famed director Nana Asihene of NKACC, published a blogpost in response to the popular dancehall, Shatta Wale's charge that Ghanaian music video directors were killing the careers of Ghanaian artists. In the post, Asihene revealed how artists approached him with requests to make exact copies of other music videos. He recalled how he shot a video but never included it in his portfolio. He stated

> I never added it to my reel or body of work. Why? Because I was ashamed. But I had to eat. Was he the only one who came to me with another music video as an idea? No. That encounter was a constant. But I decided to always engage them and give the alternate treatments which will take us in a different direction. Was it easy? No. But eventually it worked. And I found my voice. I lost a lot of money but I was content.

Unlike the director, the artist's definition of a good music video, in this instance, was a perfect copy of someone else's music video. Asihene argued that Ghanaian directors are tasked to make videos with very low budgets. For him good music videos

are comprised of two important elements: "a great idea and production value (which even determines how well the idea is executed).[11]"

Music Video Production Sets as Social Events

In this section, I will argue that music video scholarship has largely neglected to examine the production set. I will theorize around the actual processes that occurs on the production set; the space where the cultural performance is captured and then (re)presented for the public. As noted earlier, most work on this audiovisual cultural form have remained at the textual level while some have attempted to examine the actual process in which they are produced, distributed and consumed (Banks, 1996; Fitts, 2008; Ekdale, 2017). For instance, Fitts (2008) argues in her political economy of hiphop approach that the music video set is a site of gender exploitation. Yet, the production set, where the videos are shot, which typically brings together the artists, models, dancers, the director and their crew to make this art form is often excluded. The many creative hours of production on set needed to produce a 3-4-minute music video is largely missing from the analysis. Greenhalgh notes that film and media theory offer little on core practices within filmmaking and barely recognize the dynamic creative collaboration required to accomplish tasks on set. In other words, how the crew fundamentally shape the music video or film. Yet, this consideration is important because the particular social relations within a particular space and time are what enable the video to be realized.

Additionally, the video shoot often captures live performances. As Korsgaard (2017) has argued, music videos remediate older forms of media. For he notes, the

[11] See "A Case for a Ghanaian Music Video Director." Retrieved from http://www.nanakofiasihene.com/blog/2019/3/30/4dyu3582zga7kp0lmtd8gf7986okni

"music video only represents something new to the extent that it reworks" older forms of media (p.24). At its foundational form many music videos are a remediations of drama and theatre or performances more broadly, as the artist, dancers and models play characters of the songs. Greenhalgh (2010) has noted that techniques like 'cheating' originally pioneered in theater are adopted in film and video production. Cheating generally describes "all the minor adjustments needed to fit action to lenses and to arrange performers, props and settings to the lenses' points of view (Greenhalgh 2010 p.318-p.319).

Another reason to consider the production process is that sometimes the videos are never released. In my study there were many examples of this phenomenon. It begs the question: When a music video is shot and not released does it mean music video making did not occur? Are the creative experiences erased if all we do is concentrate on the released videos, and ignore the production set, specifically? I argue that to ignore the set is to exclude a foundational aspect of music videos.

I approach the music video production set as a social event. At the fundamental level it brings people into a space under specific conditions to create art. As Pernecky (2016) has noted, in the broadest sense an event describes a "'coming together' of people for various purposes, desires, needs and goals, and as a phenomenon that signifies 'an aspect of human activity that pertains to modes of socio-cultural being (Pernecky, 2013:16)" (p. xv). The music video shoot is an event that occurs in private or semi-private to then be made public in audiovisual form. The objective is the creation of a music video which may or may not be released. In other words, it is shot in a (semi) private event whose official memory is often for public consumption.

In many ways, music videos are performances of events themselves; the artificially created party videos eventually become parties in reality. Ayat, the rapper, for his video "I don't know," sent out a Facebook post inviting people to his shoot. He told me he had a large turn out on set at the community football park where they had a DJ and music blaring out of the speakers. In Fitts (2008) study, an assistant to a music video director noted that the music video shoots can turn into "a twelve-hour party" (cited in Fitts, 2008 p.220).

In proceeding with my discussion, I will draw on the notion initially derived from theatre studies, namely the theatrical event. Drawing on theatre studies is productive since the music video in most instances captures performances. Willmar Sauter first proposed the idea of the theatrical event, in which he argued that "theatre should be considered a place of meetings, encounters and confrontations, between the performer and the spectator" (Martin 2004, p.1). Sauter (2004) has argued that for an event to be considered theatrical its differentiation from other types of activities may be more relevant than its content. Thus, someone may carry out an activity differently than the way it is regularly done and then there are people who will observe and recognize the uniqueness of the activity. He outlines four segments that are always present in a theatrical event: playing culture, cultural contexts, contextual theatricality and theatrical playing. Theatrical playing describes the communicative process between the performer and the audience in the flow of the event. Following Hans-Georg Gadamer, Sauter sees the "arts basically are forms of playing." In order to play, the participants must accept the rules which cannot be easily changed by one player. Similar to the idea of rules governing how play is conducted, Greenhalgh (2010) drawing on de Certeau notes that

the regulations and institutions governing the film industry can be seen as strategies – imposed spaces in which actors must conduct their activities. Here understanding the film set as "a spatial strategy" that shapes defining the rules for playing on the film set (Greenhalgh, 2010, p.312-p.313). Also the entire film unit and the onset crew hierarchy with assigned roles can be seen as strategies in which specific roles are assigned to the operation of specific equipment.

Playing culture occurs in the present and is performed so that is it experienced at the point of creation. The same can be said with other activities like sporting events, religious ceremonies, concerts and so on. For Sauter (2004) this is what distinguishes theatre— broadly speaking as various forms of cultural performance— from what he calls written culture which he finds to be less concerned "with the here and now than with its future usefulness" (p.13). It is the here and now of the onset performances alongside creative collaboration between the performers and crew that enables the accomplishment of the music video.

Sauter's notion of contextual theatricality seeks to describe the conditions under which the theatrical event takes place. It points us to the sociocultural and political terrain in which the theatrical event occurs. As noted the theatrical event almost always faces the public and invariably occupies space publicly within the particular creative sector as well as the general social world. Music video making – and creative work in general within the hiplife industry— takes up literal and metaphysical space, and thus has the ability to reclaim space as decolonial praxis towards envisioning alternative worlds delinked from development discourse.

Temple Hauptfleisch (2004) has extended the notion of the theatrical event. Broadly drawing on various uses of the notion of theatrical event he proposes the term eventification. Primarily, he is interested in the processes involved in translating the social event into a theatrical event (p.282). Eventification, then largely describes how everyday life events are turned into "something transcendental, memorable, profitable or even 'artistic', i.e. into something with the aesthetic and other qualities normally associated with 'art'" (p.283). What he calls the eventification of the ordinary. On the other hand, he suggests that we can examine a theatrical event as simply a regular social event within the normal flow of life. It becomes just a regular activity like meetings, ceremonies and so on. Thus, for instance, a stage play is a normal social activity that is part of everyday life.

Applying these insights to music videos is revealing. The music video itself takes aspects of everyday life and eventifies them to be captured on camera. That is, regular life activities are reframed through a lens and as such are turned into a theatrical event. For instance, during an observation of Wanlov's shoot for Mensa on community the park, school kids on their way home stopped to watch. The camera tuned on Mensa signaled to passersby that this is what they should be looking at. The visual hierarchy within that space was ordered by what the camera was filming. In this way, the camera became the tool for eventifying the performance and reframing it as theatrical event for the spectators who were passing through the vicinity. Later some of the students would become willing performers in the shoot. They performed as viewers of a painting a prominent cartoonist had created on the side of an apartment block. Yet, we are also reminded that, the music video shoot itself can be reframed as simply just another everyday event. Wanlov lives in

the vicinity of the music video shoot location and the school children or community members have probably seen him shooting videos there before.

The success of the music video shoot event is heavily tied to the successful communication between the participants on set. Bear in mind that interactions can be amongst crew members; between the artists and the crew; and the participants of the shoot and the community. These must all be properly coordinated for the shoot to be successful. Typically, the artists and talent perform in front of the camera for the director and the other crew members. Essentially, the people behind the camera are an audience whose approval of the performance is necessary for the shoot to progress.

To be sure, it is safe to suggest that on set there are two audiences: the present audience and absent audience. Present spectators may include the directors and crews and featured people who are not performing at the time. One may even include the camera which becomes the instrument that activates the action to be recorded which is, of course, initiated by the director and controlled by the cinematographer. Also on production sets I sometimes observed the presence of friends of the director or artists. Often they had no official role on set, and when I asked them why they were here they would claim "for support." In a small yet tangible way, all these people become involved in making the music video and their presence shapes the outcome.

In videos that are shot in public spaces it is common to see community members spectating, eager to catch glimpse of the celebrity artist or marvel at what the women dancers may be wearing. Indeed, the presence of audience may impact the nature or outcome of the performance. One of the important forms of community participation is noninterference. What does it mean for the audience to witness the making of the art,

where the making is not the final product but is crucial to it? And where their participation will shape the creative process. Here, let me recount what Fofo said while working on Worlasi's video that needed a scene with a train. Very few trains run in Accra, they had to vigilantly wait at the station for one. He recounts:

> …so as soon as …we hear the train dey come we took out the camera, as we were entering the train den some conductor come dey shout for back 'what you people dey do?' And den the people way we pay come dey pull am. All this commotion dey happen as I dey hold the camera. Way den finally take them go pay pay dem off.

He describes how they started shooting immediately the train arrived and the conductor was shouting at them asking what they were doing. The people they had paid to secure permission to shoot came to pull the conductor away. This type of interference described in this account is all too common.

To further understand the collaboration process, Hadassah Shani (2004) has proposed a model to think about the nature of interaction in a theatrical event: namely the coordination and dynamic interactivity. Coordination requires "complete conformity" from the participants in order for the event to progress as it should (p.112). Meanwhile, dynamic interactivity, describes "the very active involvement of all the participants in a given situation" (p.112). For them "the difference between coordination and dynamic interactivity is based on initiation (altering the role of leadership), division (positioning of participants), and interdependence (shifting dominance/subservience)" (p.114).

To a large extent a music video shoot shifts between coordination and dynamic interactivity. Here, dancers, artists, models, crew members and the director collaborate to achieve a particular creative vision that requires "complete conformity." Talent is supposed to be on time for the shoot to remain on schedule and are supposed to follow

the lead of the director to fulfill their onset role expectations while adhering to a general hierarchy. In Shani's model, coordination is theorized from the notion of conventions. Here, conventions can be likened to rules within the notion of playing discussed above. They regulate behavior coordination to ensure that the desired purpose of the situation is accomplished on the production set.

While observing a small production shoot, a total of about thirty-one people on set, the director handled almost everything: the cinematography, making sure the food was prepared for the shoot, organizing the transportation, casting and costume design; and on the day of the shoot they were handling the sequence of shots. That information appeared to largely remain with the director. Thus, he was in constant demand as people kept wanting to know what needed to be done next. This pressure was palpable, as the director attempted to create art the constant demands on his time and attention to attend to things like organizing dancers' costumes took up the time he needed to concentrate on creating and capturing the right performance. Obviously, this type of onset structure produces a lot of delay. On this particular shoot, we started late and some shots were abandoned because we lost the sunlight.

Here, Bechky (2006), role-based coordination appears useful. Against the background of conventions, the interaction amongst participants (in her case crew members) reveals how coordination is enacted on a daily basis to ensure that tasks are accomplished and the role expectations are made clear. In her study of film sets in the US, she noted that the interactions were aimed at directing tasks and communicating role expectations. She discovered the public communicative practices on set involved, "effusive thanking, polite admonishing, and role-oriented joking" (p.11). For her, these

types of interactions gave the crew members “clear signals about tasks, behaviors, and expectations of their roles as well as the roles of others and the relationships between them” (p.11). For instance, the doing of tasks “were sustained was through explicit, immediate responses to both their appropriate and inappropriate role enactments. Gratitude and praise were frequent and enthusiastic; crew members were often told directly that they were enacting their roles well” (p.11). For Bechky, coordination is negotiated with each situation such as, with every new film set.

Music video making conventions and their attendant role structures legitimate the actions of the crew and talent on set. The artists and their managers typically have a lot of authority on set as they are the paying client. Often, they can determine what type of performance they are comfortable with doing and what costumes they will wear. For instance, a male artist may refuse to allow the women models touch him. However, it is unsurprising that well known directors tended to have more power on set when working with relatively non-established artists. The reverse is also true, artists would have more power on set when working with new upcoming directors. Thus, notoriety of the director or artists can shape how the power dynamics play out on the set and in turn shape coordination.

However, I must point out that expected role enactment can legitimate personnel’s behavior. While doing an observation on set, tension emerged between the female make-up artist and the male director. She was not being given timely updates on the scenes to be shot, thus she would have to do her work last-minute. Indeed, she was performing her task as expected but the director would be upset. Yet, she would not budge because for her, if the makeup was bad they will in turn blame her, even though in the heat of the

moment the director was eager to have the actors in front of the camera and ready to go. Her role expectation became the anchor to do the right thing.

As noted, the artist and manager who have paid for the video can reconfigure the nature of the engagement (indeed so can the talent who may refuse to perform a particular thing they are uncomfortable with). In this case, the dynamic interactivity reveals how the participants within the shoot can impact the progression of the music video shoot. While this conception applied to audience and performer, we can extend it to examine internal crew dynamics. The cinematographer can make suggestions to the director about specific changes to the shots. One cinematographer told me he enjoyed working with a particular director because the director was receptive to suggestions. The power dynamics here can shift as the director alone does not determine the progression of the shoot.

Further, it is necessary to consider the affective dimension of the collaboration process involved in the sustaining appropriate behavior on set. Commenting on how this occurs on film sets, Greenhalgh (2010) has noted that "crew must learn affective expertise to deal with strange and changing proximities dealt with daily on the set" (p.314). They must be able to work with people they previously did not know on complex activities in a fast-paced working environment. Those who have not been on set before are unlikely to navigate the set in a manner that may not disrupt the shoot. That is why in the U.S. and Canada film workers are advised to take a "behavioral training, advertised as 'set etiquette' before going on a set" (p.314). Some interesting observations in the field include: a director storms off the set angry about the sound technician who keeps disappearing, causing delays and extending the production time for everyone. A

newcomer to film sets who is constantly talking loud and disrupting the sound capture during shooting. The actor who is shy to perform a scene with other crew members around so the others had to leave the set for the scene to be shot. The crew who must wear dark clothes for instance, so they do not reflect colors into the scene being shot. Greenhalgh (2010) notes that this can also be distracting to the actors. Due to the collaborative nature of these shoots, sometimes everybody pitches in to help move equipment around in order to keep the shoot on schedule.

Since I had the opportunity to observe a music video shoot and a feature film production this allows me to quickly outline some comparisons. Obviously, the films shoots lasted longer, several days while the music videos could just be several hours long. Camera movement for music videos featured the cinematographer with camera swaying side to side as if is to follow the pace and rhythm of the song. Music videos sets compared to film sets, tended to be noisier, most of the video shoots I observed did not have dialogue, and thus there was no sound person with a boom mic capturing diegesis. The performers lip-synched over their music which played repetitively. The absence of the audio capture meant that people did not have to be alert all the time in terms of the amount noise being made on set. The crew did not have to wait for some something noisy in the distance to die down before shooting.

Greenhalgh (2010) has observed that the collaborative process of filmmaking allows members of the crew to mutually share knowledge in order to produce the work in which they have a sense of shared ownership. This process is just as important to the growth and development of the crew's career. As such the music video shoot is an important site of learning. The idea of "knowing in practice" helps explain how

knowledge is acquired and shared on a music video set. Here it describes how knowledge is acquired through practice and that said knowledge emerges through the participation in said practice (Billet 2001; Greenhalgh 2010). As it were, the rules of play are properly acquired though playing. It is on a music video set, the situational level, that the abstract knowledge is applied and also shaped by the particular circumstances. As Billet (2001) has noted, acquiring the expertise rests on the individual's ability to continually access the site where the social practice is being performed. On my film set observation, the camera assistant was delighted to be learning so much from the cinematographer who had in depth experience shooting on film sets in North America. Indeed, everyone on set learned something and we were all impressed at his work ethic and how he would light the scenes. Perhaps this helps account for why the music video space, even when low budget, can be a rich and productive transitional space for learning and experimenting.

Down time offers ample space for dynamic social interaction. While I was on set this was always the period to engage in debates and conversations in the broader public discourse. I recall heated exchanges that were triggered by the social media feminist activist group, Pepperdem (see chapter 4). Over a lunch break, knowledge was also exhibited and shared, personal histories were exchanged and new innovative approaches to music video shoots were discussed. I came to see these down times as points of learning, as the eager trainee's questions are answered in detail. For me as participant observer—behind the scenes photographer— these were the moments in which I would enquire about how and why particular processes were carried out.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the production of music videos in Ghana. To reiterate, making culture takes up space; physically, psychologically, emotionally and more. It then follows that it has the potential to engage in what I have called a decolonial praxis of reclamation of space. For those existing under conditions of coloniality, this reclamation of space potentially creates a "space of radical openness" (hooks 1989, p.19), a site of radical possibility and resistance. In other words, the grounds for a politics of possibility.

I also have argued that for the most part directors and artists have differing motivations and this invariably shapes their understandings of what makes a good music video. Importantly, I also demonstrate that what constitutes a good song determines whether the video will be made in the first place as directors are willing to work on videos in which they like the song. As such, while both directors and artists want creative success they may have diverging ideas about what that means. It is in these tensions that arise over the competing frames that dynamic categories like creative success become visible.

Another point I make in this chapter is that for most directors music video making is a transitional phase. They are primarily interested in making movies and commercials. This is largely due to the issue budgetary constraints and conceptual tensions between artists. The music video scene is also heavily male dominated and on set roles are highly gendered. Women are often the talent (models and dancers) or make-up artists while men are usually the directors and cinematographers.

I have also noted that the production set integral to a complete understanding of the final music video. Yet, many studies have largely focused on the textual analysis while others have examined the various actors involved in the production process. The production set highlights how creative collaboration is vital to the development of music videos. To this end, I have examined the production set as a social event that brings people together within a particular space and time to accomplish an objective. Interaction between participants on set is crucial for effectively coordinating activities. Power dynamics between the director and the artists will shape the progress of the shoot. The set also becomes an important learning platform— knowing in practice. Cultural producers are able to employ abstract knowledge through the process of doing in the here and now.

CHAPTER 3

HIPLIFE MUSIC AND THE AESTHETICS OF MODERNITY

I beg, how many songs can one make about how much money they have and the haters that want your downfall. I think after the tenth song we hear you loud and clear chale.

- Tweet May 20, 2018

Introduction

In the above tweet, I was referencing a Sarkodie song I had just heard. The people who responded to this tweet immediately knew who I was talking about. For me and these "tweeps," we had long become familiar with the narratives about attaining success that dominate his popular songs, as my then fifteen year- old nephew succinctly pointed out, Sarkodie mostly raps about "success and money." In fact, his latest album the "Highest" (2017), seemed to follow this performance genre of braggadocio.

The title, "Highest" (2017) reflects Sarkodie's idea that he had reached the zenith in Ghanaian rap and music generally; he was consistently attaining numerous awards and accolades. In the album, he focused on collaboration and worked with a number of international and local artists. The album launch for the "Highest" (2017) was held at the recently opened plush West hills mall. At the launch, in typical Sarkodie entrepreneurial spirit, he sold branded merchandise including: mugs, towels, wrist bands, t-shirts, and wife's local drink called Sobolo. The room in which Sarkodie signed albums was guarded by macho men who only admitted fans with purchased branded items. Access to Sarkodie was being sold via purchase of the branded merchandise. Additionally, several well-known artists showed up and performed a song or two. Patapaa, Kwesi Arthur, B4Bonah, Medikal and others all mounted the stage one by one to cheering fans. Indeed, the entire mall was inundated with Sarkodie fans, and these artists had to literally squeeze through

the crowd gathered at the entrance. The crowd was heavily comprised of young men, both inside the room and outside. Many fans, primarily teenagers, who could not enter—because they did not purchase anything—stood outside peering through the window trying to catch a glimpse of their favorite artist. Some fans self-fashioning resembled Sarkodie: they sported his iconic haircut and black shades. Others were in t-shirts that bore his image. As the songs of the album blared through the speakers, the fans ecstatically rapped along.

Figure 3. 1: Sarkodie poses with fan at the launch of the "Highest"(2017) album at the West Hills Mall, Kasoa, 2017

Hiplife and its stars, like Sarkodie, have come to represent how to successfully inhabit a postcolonial space, and as such, they circulate ideas about what it means to live a modern life. On the terrain of Ghanaian cultural politics, they have become visible models of male success. Indeed, hiplife has become a site where the dream of a good life

is reinscribed (Osumare, 2013). Its artists often depend on visual forms of self-representation such as dress, photography and, importantly, music videos to construct these images of success. These stars have become one of the primary frames through which Ghanaian youth (particularly young men) come to understand modernity. Sarkodie's astute entrepreneurial sense aligns with the state's imperatives to produce entrepreneurial citizens, which makes him such an important cultural-political figure in Ghana and beyond.

Figure 3. 2: Fans at the "Highest" (2017) album launch, Kasoa, 2017

While increased infrastructure and a modest growth of the middle class may highlight, for some, the modest move to "modernity," for a vast number of people poverty is their lived experience. The disparity between the minority rich and the majority poor is steadily increasing not only in Africa but worldwide.[12] Notwithstanding, individuals in impoverished communities have become preoccupied with the social ideology of the possibility of economic growth and its attendant cosmopolitan lifestyle advanced by transnational corporations (Osumare, 2014). As Ferguson (2006) has

[12] A recent report by Oxfam indicates that the share of wealth owned by the top 1% has increased from 44% in 2009 to 48% in 2014. See "New Oxfam report says half of global wealth held by the 1%." Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jan/19/global-wealth-oxfam-inequality-davos-economic-summit-switzerland

asserted, because people's lived experience is "structured by the modern capitalist world system or that they inhabit a social landscape shaped by modernist projects does not imply that they enjoy conditions of life that they themselves would recognize as modern" (p.168).

In this chapter, I intend to trace how common sense ideas of modernity are channeled through hiplife. Specifically, my analysis examines how mainstream male hiplife musicians[13] construct an entrepreneurial branded self, which then becomes an index of a modern life (Hearn, 2008). Additionally, my aim is to explore how living in a space defined as underdeveloped (Escobar, 2011) is embodied and performed in order to access the good life. I examine the media interviews, songs and music videos of Sarkodie, one of the biggest third generation (Osumare, 2012) Ghanaian hiplife artists with an astute entrepreneurial sense. I also use participant observations and interviews with fans, musicians, music video directors and other professionals involved in the hiplife music scene in Accra. In 2013, Channel O and Forbes Africa ranked Sarkodie 8th in the Top 10 Most Bankable African Artists due to his brand value, number of endorsements, social media presence, earnings, bookings and popularity. In 2017 he was ranked number nine.

One of the lines of argument I pursue in this chapter is that while these hiplife artists are akin to priests evangelizing the gospel of materialist success within the logic of the free market, they serve as reassurances that success under the current economic model is achievable. Nonetheless, these youths (often men) must also negotiate upward social

[13] I distinguish between commercially successful hiplife musicians and their underground counterparts who struggle to secure economic security from their music.

mobility despite the current socio-economic conditions to attain some level of economic security. Additionally, their success, and more importantly, their performances of success, not only underscore their desire to access the good life but also create distance from notions of poverty and backwardness associated with underdevelopment. These performances of success project several ideas: entrepreneurship leads to the production of material wealth, which then grants you access to the 'good life,' a 'modern life'. Nonetheless, the images of success in mainstream hiplife do not necessarily reflect the everyday realities of most Ghanaians, and are, at times, deemed inauthentic by their fans. The most visible example of this is the recent trend by hiplife artists to shoot music videos in economically advanced countries, like the U.S., U.K., and South Africa.

It is my contention that cultural productions such as hiplife reflect the broader operation of development discourse in postcolonial societies like Ghana. This chapter builds on growing hiplife scholarship (Shipley, 2012; Ousmare, 2012; Oduro-Frimpong, 2009) to examine hiplife's celebration of entrepreneurial self-branding as an articulation of the development apparatus' construction of Ghana as underdeveloped. To desire to live in a developed society, means first, accepting your condition as underdeveloped (Esteva, 2012). The performance of success, an offshoot of self-branding, not only projects aspirations but also counters stereotypical narratives about Africa and its people. This is mediated by development discourse which becomes a framework that shapes how people see themselves (read: underdeveloped) and also influences their aspirations (read: to be developed).

Developing to be Modern

In 2016, I set out to ask Ghanaians involved in the cultural industry their ideas about development. The responses about Ghana's development ranged from: "Ghana is not developed," it is "in between" to its "developed." The problems highlighted included: poor infrastructure (roads, transportation), inability to access basic needs (food, potable water) and, most prominently, bad leadership. Some described the urban areas as developed and the use of 'modern' technology as a sign of modernization. Notably, several advanced the idea of situating development locally and noted that when measured via the apparatus of development then you could say Ghana is underdeveloped. This awareness of the imposition of what development was expected to be was present in some of the responses. However as one participant noted "I think that every country has its own way of development in relation to their cultural values." Additionally, the U.S. was invoked as either a source of mimicry or contrast.

Concerns about becoming developed have meant that governments of so-called underdeveloped countries have implemented all manner of interventions. Mbembe (2008) has observed that in post-independence Africa, development became a "central metaphor and utopia for social transformation" (p. 108). It was packaged as the as the site to realize collective rights (as opposed to individual rights) and happiness. He argues, however, that in the early 1990s the shift to a liberalized economy and liberal democracy would dismantle the collectivist consensus of "post-colonial communalism" and would rather insist on "individual rights" and re-kindle debates "on private property" (p.108).

Neoliberal polices have now become one of the latest vehicles to attain development. The 1970s collapse of commodity prices allowed state capitalist economies

to fall into recession (Wengraf 2018). Several third world countries out of desperation for credit went to western financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The conditions for the loans they obtained came with harsh debt regimes and devastating structural adjustments (SAPs) in the form of deregulation and free trade. These lead to severe austerity and an industrialization decline that caused living conditions to deteriorate. The global recession, Wengraf (2018) argues, allowed advanced economies "to use the international financial institutions to remake global markets in the interest of Western capital" (p.4). As she asserts, they essentially served as "battering rams" against the economies in the global south. The IMF and World Bank moved from "Keynesian framework of stimulating demand to one of austerity." They employed harsh loan conditions to "drive down national incomes, both to facilitate the repayment of massive Third World debt and to transform economies of the Global South into one based on 'export-led' strategies – those set up to best serve the market needs of global capital" (Wengraf 2018, p.62-p.63). For her, this marks the turn toward neoliberalism.

The commencement of the structural adjustment program in 1983 liberalized the Ghanaian economy and established it as a "neoliberal pacesetter" on the African continent (Chalfin, 2010, p.6). As Konadu-Agyemang (2000) captures it, the SAPs in Ghana involved:

> …compressing government expenditure through massive cuts in social services and retrenching public sector workers; adjusting the exchange rate through discrete devaluation of Ghana's currency, the Cedi ; abolishing domestic price controls; mobilization of government revenue through broadening of the tax base; and the strengthening of tax administration. Other strategies include completing the privatization of state-owned enterprises, promoting the efficient allocation of resources for growth, rehabilitation of economic infrastructure, increasing reliance on market-based instrument of monetary policy, and encouraging sector development. There has also been a massive export drive to encourage the

> production and export of both traditional exports (cocoa, mineral resources, timber) and non-traditional exports (crafts, foodstuff, vegetables). (p.474)

Supporters of the SAP claimed it rescued Ghana from the complete economic collapse that the country faced. For instance, in the previous decade Ghana's GDP was constantly at negative growth but improved with the SAP. In the years "[b]etween 1984 and 1991, GDP growth averaged 5%–6%, and since 1992 has hovered between 2.5% and 4%" (Konadu-Agyemang (2000, p.475). Yet, the severe austerity advanced by the SAP negatively impacted particularly education and healthcare. In the first phase of the SAPs (1983-1986) less than 5% the budget was allocated to social services which included health and education. The share of the budget allocated to education fell from "4.3% of government expenditure in 1982 (ISSER 1993, 1995) to less than 1% in both 1996 and 1997" (Konadu-Agyemang, 2000, p.476). Further, between 1983 to 1998 the cedi was estimated to have been devalued by 80, 000%.

Quinn Slobodian (2018) offers an important observation about the (Geneva School) neoliberal perspective on the decolonization of the Global South. For him, "decolonization…was central to the emergence of the neoliberal model of world governance" (p.5). He suggests that these neoliberals were vehemently opposed to national autonomy "they believed that after empire, nations must remain embedded in an international institutional order that safeguarded capital and protected its right to move throughout the world" (p.9). For them, decolonization would increase the spread of democracy— independent nations getting voting rights in international institutions— which could interfere with these objectives. Indeed, some neoliberals opposed one-person-one-vote in apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia. For example, William Hutt called for weight voting based on income (p.176). To be sure, they sought "a complete

protection of private capital rights, and the ability of supranational judiciary bodies like the European Court of Justice and WTO to override national legislation that might disrupt the global rights of capital" (p.13). The WTO, what Slobodian (2018) calls the "paradigmatic product of the Geneva School neoliberalism" was used to protect the mobility of private capital from the sovereignty of new postcolonial states.

One of the core tenets of neoliberalism is the notion that a free market and free trade will guarantee individual freedom (see Harvey 2005). According to Rose (1999), under this logic, citizens become "entrepreneurialized" and thus they see themselves as self-reliant and do not require state assistance. The role of the state is to ensure that there are structures in place to facilitate this. Neoliberalization meant that the state would reconfigure all aspects of "national policy" to allow the creation and maintenance of the free market (Rose, 1999, p.141). In turn, social behavior had to be transformed to align with this new economic system. In other words, the market would be used to regulate the entire society (Berthoud, 2012). Yet, Slobodian (2018) has argued that the neoliberals focused on establishing "market enforcers" (p.11). As he suggests, these neoliberals were focused not so much on the "market per se but on redesigning states, laws, and other institutions to protect the market" (p.6). In this way, he describes the "neoliberal idea that markets are not natural but are products of the political construction of institutions to encase them" (Slobodian 2018, p.7). Under neoliberalism, the function of the state is to facilitate the empowerment of "entrepreneurial subjects of choice in the quest for self-realization" (Rose, 1999, p.142). Thus, under this logic the state is not looked at to answer to the needs of the society, for instance, in terms of health, education and security.

It is the individual's duty as good citizen to strive to improve their "economic well-being" (Rose, 1999, p.145).

Celebrity and the Branded Self

The idea of celebrity-commodity describes in part how fame can convert into economic value. Hearn and Schoenoff (2016) have described celebrity as "a constructed subjectivity comprised of a distinct set of self-referential, attention-seeking, market-aware practices" (p.196). They point out there are two types of what can be described as the celebrity-commodity: "celebrity as performer and the celebrity as image and promotional object" (Hearn & Schoenoff 2016, p.197). Under the capitalist system everything stands to be commodified—the commodity becomes central to accumulation (Prodnick, 2012). Commodification transforms the use-value of goods and services into exchange-value. The Marxian perspective posits that commodity effaces all the social relations that have "congealed in the commodity form" (Mosco, 1996, 129). For Banet-Weiser (2016), this Marxian critique of commodification in some respects "does not acknowledge the (human) labor that is necessary for the production process." She argues that self-branding requires the individual to work as the producer in constructing their own life story. Thus, for her a pertinent distinction "between commodification and branding is thus the self-conscious role of individual labor in the production of the self-brand. This labor of the individual is a necessary element in the 'enterprising self,' (Banet-Weiser 2016, p.70-p.71).

As Shipley (2012) has observed in hiplife, "celebrity becomes a fetish, a nonmaterial form of desire that stands in for labor and material wealth" (p. 280). Aspiring Ghanaian hiplife musicians aim to attain celebrity because they realize that

"financial support for music comes primarily from corporate sponsorship and market recognition— they increasingly create personal brands, striving to be made into corporate icons for mobile service providers, drinks, and house hold goods" (Shipley 2012, p.5). Their names and images are used to promote radio and television programs, events, products and services. They strive to produce the immaterial commodity "celebrity" which is produced, in part, through affective labor. One artist I interviewed uses her music to build her celebrity. In turn, she uses her celebrity to earn income by marketing products and services online while also getting paid to make appearances at events. In her case, the objective of music making is in fact producing celebrity through the visibility offered via music production. To be sure, celebrity effaces the social relations inherent in it; it endows the performer with some sort of intrinsic natural value. We must bear in mind that celebrity is manufactured, it is made up of a set of social relations, in the forms of agents/promoters, collaborations with other artists and the affective labor of the artist herself/himself.

The celebrity making is further extended through the process of celebrity branding. Hearn and Schoenoff (2016) have asserted that celebrity branding creates more ways to connect to consumers and improves the generation of celebrity value. Indeed, they note, celebrity branding cannot be reduced to just a shorthand for value, but rather it is a generator of value in itself. For them, this occurs because celebrity branding is anchored "on the ongoing and infinitely malleable distinctiveness of the celebrity's "personal" lifestyle"(Hearn and Schoenoff, 2016, p.200). Here, the question of authenticity becomes relevant as the celebrity's brand needs to convince consumers of its authenticity— be a true image of the celebrity when the camera is turned off. Banet-

Weiser (2012), also speaking within the context of North America, suggests that contemporary "brand culture signals a broader shift, from "authentic" culture to the branding of authenticity" (p.20). For her, today's brand cultures are so interwoven into the broader society that one cannot easily distinguish between them. Spaces that were often thought of as authentic, for instance self-identity, are now more and more "formed as branded spaces, structured by brand logic and strategies, and understood and expressed through the language of branding" (p.20).

Self-branding, promoting oneself, becomes key in the production of the "enterprising self" or "entrepreneurial self". It is in this regard that Hearn's (2010) notion of the "branded self" becomes useful to illuminate how people attempt to win attention in an increasingly competitive terrain. As a "commodity-sign" the branded self is an "entity that works and, at the same time, points to itself working, striving to embody" the dominant cultural and economic values (Hearn, 2008, p.201). The commodity, the self, sells its labor on the market and must have "its own promotional skin." The production of the branded self involves a purposeful construction of a "meta-narrative and meta-image of self through the use of cultural meanings and images drawn from the narratives and visual codes of the mainstream culture industries" (Hearn, 2008, p.198).The branded self becomes a site where value is extracted due to its contextual situation and usage(Hearn, 2008).

Hearn posits that self-branding is a type of affective labor performed by people in order to attain popularity to safeguard themselves within this unpredictable capitalist system. The concept of affective labor emerges out of the idea that we have now transitioned from the age industrialization into the age of informatization (Hardt, 1999).

A key concept emerging out of this thinking is the notion of immaterial labor, originating from autonomist Marxists writings in the late 1990s (Hearn, 2010, p.63). Immaterial labor, as propounded by Maurizio Lazzarato "produces the cultural content of the commodity (and) involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as "work" – in other words the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and […] public opinion" (Lazzarato, 1996, pp. 133-34 cited in Hearn, 2010, p.63). Thus, immaterial labor can encompass designers, musicians, knowledge workers and care givers (who mostly do not receive wages). This form of labor "draws on the subjective attributes of workers, such as creativity, intelligence, caring and linguistic skills, immaterial labor produces distinct communities and relationships, social networks, social meanings, and ultimately social life itself" (Hardt & Negri 2004, p. 109); it blurs the lines between the economic, the social, the political and the cultural" (cited in Hearn,2010, p.64). Hearn (2010) notes the utilization of "affect, expressive self, or personality" are a key feature of the received notion of immaterial labor (p.64). Affective labor is a type of immaterial labor (Hardt, 1999); it is especially germane when considering the work of musicians because the entertainment industry is not only interested in the production of media to attract audiences but also manipulation of audience's affect.

In Ghana the branded self takes on a particular valence. As Hearn (2008) has argued, image-brands echo the imperatives of the society in which they exist. This is undergirded by the need to build relationships with the consumer and self-promote through self-narration. In Ghana brands may also reflect the aspirational dimension associated with living in a space defined as underdeveloped. Since self-branding is a

"performance genre" (Gershon, 2016) which involves labor, to live in the "undignified" condition (Esteva, 2012) of underdevelopment means that one is always laboring to attain development, to be a modern subject within a postcolonial space. Indeed, just as nation branding is being pursued by the Brand Ghana Office to attract direct foreign investment for national development, citizens are also called to improve themselves and become a developed people.[14]

The position I have been describing is that neoliberalism has become the latest developmental vehicle to promise modernity. While it partly explains the celebration of entrepreneurship within the current free market logic, it does not tell us why Europe and North America are regarded as models which all other cultures must emulate. Instead, this fallacy of developmentalism is inherent to and reproduced in discourse of development. The insights gleaned from Escobar's development discourse (chapter 1) are pertinent to understanding how concerns to attain development become central not only to the Ghanaian state but also its citizenry. This is not to argue that all Ghanaians regard the nation as underdeveloped; however, it appears there is significant consensus that the country is underdeveloped. To this end, aesthetic expressions such as hiplife become a site where the project towards development are enacted while at the same time reinforcing the developmentalist fallacy. Here one may suggest that these "positive" images are intended to counter stereotypical narratives about Africa and its people. However, these "positive" images risk the possibility of simply constructing Ghanaian versions of the 'Western' things.

[14] See "Brand Ghana strategises to attract investment." Retrieved from https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/brand-ghana-strategises-to-attract-investment.html

Hiplife and Success

In 2016, the hiplife song "Fale Fale" (2015) received an award in the category Best Music for Development at the prestigious annual Vodafone Ghana Music Awards. Gasmilla's song was addressing the deplorable conditions of plastic polluted beaches. The video for the song "Fale Fale" (2015) ends with a quote: "clean your environment when you have to, not when you need to. That's responsibility." The organizers, Charter House, described the category as "an honorary award that goes to the best song with lyrics and possibly a project or video that promotes social development." It is unsurprising that this awards show has a category specifically for development songs since this is keeping at pace with the national imperative to attain development. Indeed, music directly aimed as developmental projects is not uncommon. A recent example is UNICEF Ghana's use of the song "Wash Wana Hands" (2015) to encourage hand washing as part of its campaign to prevent cholera and ebola. It was sung in nine languages and featured a number of hiplife artists.

In Ghana, historically, mass media has always been regarded as an avenue to push social change. Prior to Ghanaian independence in 1957, President Nkrumah, transformed the British colonial propaganda outlet, the Gold Coast Film Unit, into the Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) with the mandate to "use film to educate and modernize the masses, to define and celebrate traditional values, to develop a unifying national consciousness and to counter stereotypical representations of Africa and Africans abroad (Garritano, 2013, p.47). We must recall that British colonialists introduced mass media for war propaganda and mass education. Chikowero (2014) shows how radio was used in the African colonies to engender support for the British World War II effort. For

instance, the radio broadcasts would frame “German and Italian racial supremacist policies” as threats that would likely spread into all countries (Chikowero 2014, p.123). We must bear in mind, Chikowero (2014) argues, that “radio, like the press and cinema, was a technology of domination first and foremost” (p.112).

Smyth (2014) also points out that an important “concern for the Colonial Office was how the new technologies could be used as a means of socializing Africans into the British Empire and later the Commonwealth” (p.65-p.66). For instance, international organizations were interested in understanding the impact of western capitalism on traditional Africa societies. In 1932 the International Missionary Council (IMC), and the Carnegie Corporation, began the first major attempt to employ film as vehicle for social change in British colonies in Africa. Funded by the Carnegie foundation and under the general direction of Merle Davis (Department of Social and industrial research of the IMC later World council of churches), the team observed that the Copperbelt mines had significantly changed central African preindustrial community. Merle Davis advised that cinema should be used to help unlettered Africans “adjust to the coming of western capitalist society, with its alien social and economic standards, and drew up a plan for a film experiment on behalf of the IMC. The experiment would study the use of cinema as an instrument for ‘education and cultural adjustment’” (p.67).

The ideas of the IMC were like those of the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) plan at the time (Smyth, 2014). Under the general direction of Merle Davis, BEKE locally produced the 16 mm silent films. When screened, the films were accompanied with sound from a gramophone. This meant that the films could be displayed in the languages of the many communities they visited. BEKE would make

thirty-five films comprised of seven reels which included nineteen about agriculture and six on health. A number of the films were instructional like “Hides” (1935), which taught appropriate tanning methods and “Tea” (1934) which demonstrated how tea was cultivated and prepared. Indeed, Smyth (2014) suggests, the story formats of the films produced were forerunners to education-entertainment films. For instance, performance drama was employed in “The Chief” (1935) to show tensions between the traditional and the modern in a village. The characters in the film included an unwell chief, an indigenous medicine man and a medical doctor. The “Post Office Saving Bank” (1935) used the Mr. Wise and Mr. Foolish theme. As one of the earliest uses of this theme, the film depicts Mr. foolish burying money in the ground which is later stolen (Smyth, 2014). On the other hand, Mr. Wise saves it in the bank where it is apparently safe. Essentially some of these films were employed to train Africans to be more productive to support the imperial extractive economy of the colonies.

The films on tanning and tea were meant to improve productivity to fuel the imperial economy to supply goods to imperial markets. However, in post-independence, Collins (2005) notes that when commercial and popular entertainment were integrated into the Nkrumah’s national policy it was related to “national identity, [but] today it is in connection with national economic prosperity” (p.38). The point here is that, historically and presently, the media have been regarded as pivotal tools to modernize the citizenry.

At this point it is important to recall hiphop’s early presence in Ghana. Initially, the genre was popular amongst Ghanaian elites who could travel, had the necessary technology and command of English language idioms (Shipley, 2009). Like its predecessor highlife, hiplife is continuation of the hybrid forms of black diasporic music.

Eventually, as hiphop began to be embraced widely in Ghana Shipley (2009) suggests it no longer represented an aesthetic of U.S. African American resistance but one that symbolized some kind of elite status (p.646). The fashion aesthetics allowed young Ghanaians to claim these cultural markers as signifiers of access to western modernity.

Drawing on Franz Fanon, Clark (2018) argues that essentially "[h]iphop culture is a culture of the colonized, or the oppressed" (p.74). However, she argues that commercialized hiphop and its attendant consumer culture is implicated in U.S. capitalism. For her, this has depoliticized most commercial hiphop. Yet, it is this type of hiphop that has been widely circulated in Africa as part of necolonialism. In this way, while hiphop is not the culture of the colonizer the "commercialized, mainstream hiphop culture can be seen as a product of the 'colonizer'" (p.74).

Before we go further, it seems important to point out the impact of the 1980s crises on musical cultural production. John Collins (2007) has observed that after the late 1970s, Ghana's economic decline and political instability meant that by the "mid-1980s the country and its music industry hit-rock bottom"(p.40). Professional musicians left the country in droves. Indeed, an estimate by Musician's Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) in 1979 claimed that about a quarter of their 4000 registered members were out of the country. In that same year in May, MUSIGA would embark on a street march protesting the shortage of vinyl; music piracy; and demanding recognition (p.39-p.40). The crises, a two- and half-year curfew between 1982-1984 coupled with high import duty of 160% on musical instruments, gave birth to new musical forms like local gospel music and techno pop styles such as burgher highlife and hiplife (Collins, 2005, p.18). Against this background the prevalence of live music would also decline. This would help the rise of "'spinners'

or mobile discos" during the late 1970s. They took over live performance outlets and band stands. The spinning operations, with one DJ and a few assistants, were relatively economical compared to the large concert and highlife bands (Collins, 2007, p.40).

By the time hiplife emerges, the Ghanaian economy is liberalized and democracy has returned; private media entities created; and several Ghanaians abroad returned (see Shipley, 2012). These returnees regarded themselves as "purveyors of black cosmopolitan sensibilities for locals" (Paa K cited in Shipley, 2012, p.89). One of the prominent figures of hiplife was Reggie Rockstone a London 'returnee' who had also travelled to New York, U.S.A. Rockstone, "the first Ghanaian celebrity of the neoliberal era," fused highlife and hiphop to coin the term hiplife (Shipley, 2012, p.105). He credits part of his success in Ghana to the fact that he was perceived as an U.S. American who performed in Twi.[15] Rockstone became a template for the younger generation of artists, like Sarkodie, to emulate.

To an extent, hiplife artists endeavor to live the good life like the figure of the "homeboy" in Diawara's (2009) work on U.S. hiphop. For instance, the hiplife star, Sarkodie regards Jay-Z, the first billionaire hiphop artist and businessman, as one of his role models. In fact, Mark Anthony Neal (2013) has described "Jay Z [as] the very embodiment of homeboy cosmopolitism" (p.38). Diawara (2009) has described homeboy cosmopolitanism as a method that young black men in the U.S. use to escape the scourges and constraints of racism and the limitations it places on their black bodies (p.239).[16] The cultural politics around homeboy activism center "mobility and

[15] See "Accra reclaims hip-hop." Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3241007.stm
[16] Earlier, Harold Cruse (1968) had described the African American experience in the United States as form of internal colonialism. He argued that the U.S. African American was a semi-colonial subject.

consumption" as central aspects in the journey toward the "black good life" (Diawara, 2009, p.273). Homeboys refuse to be wholly defined by narrow racial stereotypes but deploy them in the service of the market to make profit. Diawara suggests "that the search for the good life not only is in keeping with the nationalist struggle for citizenship and belonging, but also reveals the need to go beyond such struggles and celebrate the redemption of the black individual through tradition" (p.238). Extending Diawara's contribution, Neal (2013) argues that "hiphop cosmopolitanism is undergirded by desires for physical, social, and economic mobility" (p.37). Additionally, it is "a mobility from or even within the essential tropes — playa, pimp, hustler, thug, and nigga — that define contemporary mainstream hiphop masculinities" (Neal, 2013, p.37).

Diawara's ideas about homeboy mobility and consumption bear some semblance to Paul Gilroy's (2010) pertinent discussion about U.S. African American consumption of automobiles. Gilroy points out that African Americans were being hailed as consumers long before they gained citizenship rights (p.9). For U.S. African Americans, automobiles appeared to have "conferred or rather suggested dimensions of citizenship and status" that they were excluded from due to racialized practices (p.34). Further, he claims there is evidence to suggest that, at times, minorities pursued strategies of conspicuous consumption "in order to win and to compel recognition as human beings" (p.9). He suggests that the "distinctive history of propertylessness and material deprivation" might be what motivates African Americans to have "a disproportionate investment in particular forms of property that are publicly visible and in the status that corresponds to them" (p.20- p.21). However, the danger, he argues, is when it appears that freedom means winning the right to shop "on the same terms" as others considered

"privileged citizens" (p.25). For him, these forms of "heavily branded visibility" are acts to "publicly demonstrate their access" (p.25). What Gilroy's submission underscores for the current project is how conspicuous consumption appears to be not only a desire for recognition but also access to exclusive racialized domains such as 'humanity,' or more specifically, for our purposes 'developed.'

As Diawara (2009) argues, homeboy cosmopolitanism is a method young black men use to circumscribe "their exclusion from all social roles not conventionally associated with blackness" (p.239). Here, I must point out that exclusion makes those domains the even more attractive to the marginalized. As gatekeepers control access to those spaces, they not only affirm the legitimacy of those domains but they essentially define who can belong. In such a manner, domains like 'humanity' or 'developed' operate through exclusion which it turns into the aspiration, so to speak for the marginalized. Similarly, development discourse also operates as a discourse of exclusion. By keeping the underdeveloped out it confers legitimacy onto itself and those who produce this discourse.

I would like to further defend this point with an example from the colonial period. Ferguson (2006) recounts how in colonial era Africa, the colonized - particularly the urban elites - mimicked European cultural forms. He notes that when urban elites used European cultural forms they were indeed "asserting rights to the city and pressing by their conduct, claims to the political and social rights of full membership in a wider society" (Ferguson, 2006, p.161). Thus the acquisition and subsequent display of European fashion and other material goods remained the singular mode by which they could make the claim of being a civilized people. They could participate as complete and

somewhat equal citizens in the "modern urban society" (Ferguson, 2006, p.162). This was a claim to membership; emulating the colonizer "did not concern the incorporation of Western symbolic materials into African local cultural systems...but rather the place Africans were to occupy in a global sociocultural order, their status in a new 'world society'" (p.162).

As the foregoing discussion indicates, artists may draw on symbolic narratives of success to make claims upon spaces they have been excluded from. Yet, there are gendered dimensions about who can perform this success. Shipley (2012) argues that male hiplife stars draw on "gendered narratives of success in fashioning a new popular aesthetic of masculine urban consumption" (p.81). For instance, Reggie Rockstone constructs a masculinized entrepreneurial subject, a subject who is "at once respectful of local tradition and irreverent, experienced in travel, and fluent in the art of reassembling various styles in new ways that are at once recognizable and innovative" (p.107). On the other hand, Shipley (2012) reveals how a public response to the sexual assault against Mzbel shows the constraints on this "gendered agency under conditions of liberalization" (p.168). When Mzbel was sexually assaulted in 2005, some of the public sentiment claimed her assault was her fault because, according to them, she dressed and performed in a sexually provocative manner (Shipley, 2012, p.163). This type of sexualized violence is not new. Shipley recounts how "female entrepreneurs have been punished for social-moral decay during moments of economic transition" in Ghana (p.164). For instance, in the 1979 coup, market women were stripped naked and whipped in the public for "hoarding" goods and "acting immorally at the expense of the nation" (p.164).

To some degree, hiplife artists perpetuate what Dyer (1998) described as "the myth of success", that is, all can attain success regardless of their social and economic circumstances. The myth advances the idea that talent and hard work guarantees success. Mainstream hiplife artists present a particular vision of success characterized typically in the form of conspicuous consumption. This also implies that money is also worth possessing as what you earn grants you access to the realm of the good life. Stars, and success as a signifier, sustain the notion that selling your labor power on the marketplace is meaningful and rewarding.

Case Study: Sarkodie

Sarkodie, originally known as Michael Owusu-Addo, is undoubtedly one of the biggest names in hiplife music. He has also established himself as an entrepreneur par excellence in the Ghanaian music scene. This is evidenced by his high-level corporate endorsements; big budget music videos; domestic and international concerts; his modes of self-fashioning; and now, his speaking engagements about his successful career. In 2014, he founded his record label SarkCess music (an obvious riff of the term success). He has won numerous awards on both domestic and international platforms. In 2012, he won the "Best international Act: Africa" at the Black Entertainment Television awards in the U.S. His album, Rappaholic (2012), also received three awards at the annual Ghana Music Awards. He launched The Sarkodie Foundation in 2013 to help children. In that same year, his video "Illuminati," directed by GYO Gyimah of Phamous Philms, won 'Best Hip-pop Video of the Year,' and three other awards at the 4syte Music Video Awards in Ghana. While in 2017 his video, "Overdose," directed by David Nichol-Sey, won the overall Best Video at the 4syte Music Video Awards.

Sarkodie comes from a relatively modest background; he grew up in Community 9, Tema and Mile 7 all in the Greater Accra region. He was initially discovered by Dr. Duncan (Isaac Duncan Williams) of Adom FM 106.3 (a local language radio station) and manager of Duncwills Entertainment. Dr. Duncan sponsored street carnivals that offered MCs like Sarkodie the opportunity to "cut their teeth" battling on this platform. Later Sarkodie would also participate in the rap competition, "Kasahare Level" on Adom FM. He raps primarily in Twi, Pidgin English, and now, increasingly in English as it appears to appeal to transnational audiences. Below, I discuss how he constructs and performs success to secure economic security.

Working Hard, Becoming Successful

> I loved the name, when I was growing up my dad had friends, like two friends, all with the name Sarkodie, each and every one was wealthy, everyone was rich. And outside that I met a couple of Sarkodies elsewhere and they were all kind of rich, I was like, is like coincidental or like does that name have an effect on your life. (Interview with Nayoka, 2016)

The vignette above highlights Sarkodie's motivation for his chosen stage name or what Auslander (2004) refers to as the "performance persona." Immediately, one observes concerns with securing material wealth and escaping the scourges of economic oppression to access the good life. Here, I want to focus on how he describes his rise to success. The way he recounts this story in his songs, videos and media interviews illustrates how his hard work and talents eventually lead to his success. I describe this as the hustler's rhetoric.

Sarkodie regards his musical success as a rags-to-riches story. In an interview on Hot 97, a well-known U.S. hiphop radio station, he stated, "I think I have the beginning of almost every true hustler" (Breaking Boarders: Hot 97 interview with Sarkodie, 2015). Indeed the theme for his 2016 talk at the Harvard Business School was the "The Art of

the Hustle." He believes in working hard and perfecting his craft in order to attain success. He claims he does not want to rely on gimmicks, like flying to the Grammys (in the U.S.) and taking pictures with stars. He wants:

> to earn it in the hard way… Which is like you need to start from ground and work hard towards that end. So what I am gonna do is work hard on my material, I want my material to speak for itself. I don't want to you to go and sell me to somebody falsely.

Further, he states, "I wasn't looking at being an artist, I was looking at sharing my story. It started from that and then I realized you can make money from it. So that is where I had to switch from being just a little boy on the streets to turn professional" (Breaking Boarders: Hot 97 interview with Sarkodie, 2015). This decision to turn his talent for rapping into a means of earning a living not only marked beginnings of his commercialized aesthetic but it underscores his ability to turn his talent for rapping into economic value. Bradley (2017) captures similar sentiment about the U.S. rapper 50 Cent, he notes that we have "reached a point in rap culture in which 50 Cent will admit to Forbes magazine that rhyming for him is a business decision. We've moved beyond boasts about collecting fat royalty checks to rhymes about business deals with multinational corporations" (p.195).

In Sarkodie's numerous autobiographical songs, like "Illuminati" (2013), he refers to his success as a "blessing," highlighting how material items are regarded as gifts from God. In an interview with Nayoka Oware (2016), he indicates that even though he was confident he would succeed, he did not know to what extent. For Sarkodie, "that's up to God" who "shows the way" and "[paves] the way for whoever." This view is congruent with the gospel of success thesis which is prevalent in some charismatic Christian churches in Ghana. People who subscribe to this theology believe that material

wealth and health comes to faithful believers of the word of God. Here, hard work and talent may not necessarily guarantee you success unless you are deemed faithful to receive it from God. “God bless our hustle,” painted across my friend’s shirt captures this perspective succinctly.

In Ghana, one cannot examine popular culture and Ghana and ignore religion. Indeed, J Collins (2004) has argued that there is a circular relationship between popular performance and Christianity, they inform each other. For instance, historically indigenous popular music like highlife influenced the “‘praises’ and ‘choruses’ of the independent churches.” Also, he observed that from the 1950s several of the spiritual churches began employing instruments from the dance bands (double bass, guitar and bongos) brass band instruments and performing in ‘dance-club’ style (p.410). Further, “western stagecraft and the separation of the raised platform was also introduced via the ‘cantata’ bible plays of missionaries” (J. Collins, 2004, p.409 - p.410)

More recently, Patapaa’s (a rapper from Swedru) song “One Corner” (2017) created a dance craze that took over the nation. While some people excitedly dance to this tune others were livid at the sight of people gyrating their waists to the addictive rhythm of the song. Predictably, some Christian leaders and some cultural elite were up in arms. While the latter regarded these performances as lowbrow, Christians leaders claimed they were immoral and possessed by a bad spirit. Of course, religious push back in popular music and dance is not new, the European missionaries before them wanted to ban the dance, asiko, in 1908 because they claimed it was ‘obscene’ (J. Collins 2004). In one of the renditions of “One Corner” (2017), the dancers fall to ground and shakes as if in an epileptic episode. Patapaa then walks over and touches them and they stop shaking. This

is very characteristic of church aesthetic practices of spiritual possession and deliverance which are common features of popular religious shows on TV.

Further, in the discussion on religion, morality and hiplife, Odamtten's (2013) examination of Lil Shaker's Allah Dey suggests that Ghanaian hiplifers have a "deep understanding of God in various religious contexts," and shows their "religious pluralism and tendency to be ecumenical in their views." Lil Shaker's song recognizes various religious themes. For instance, he combines Judeo-Christian ideas of a Supreme Being with the Akan version of Jesus Christ, Yesu Christo. Additionally, he references the Rastafarian idea of God, namely Jah. Odamtten (2013) has also observed that hiplife rappers like Obrafuor, who refers to himself as the "rap sofour" (rap priest), adopts a style of oratory like indigenous priests. For instance, the chorus to Obrafuor's song Kwame Nkrumah uses religious incantation as well as the call and response performance employed in indigenous Akan libations.

Additionally, Odamtten (2013) suggests that hiplife artists are also involved in the process of "renewing religious traditions with foreign models" (p.198). For instance, he observes that in Nkasei's song, "Adua ne Bu" (the tree is broken or fallen), Jesus Christ is transformed into a local ancestor whose way of life is desecrated by the arrival of European products and the brutal Transatlantic slave trade. Odamtten argues that the song actually reflects African diasporic notions about the Black Christ. Further, he observes that Nkasei regards Christianity as a European weapon in the way they identify it with the gun. Thus, the Christian religion is depicted as "a destructive weapon and the cause of the woes of African societies" (p.200). Yet, Nkasei also represents Jesus within an African context and gives him an indigenous identity. This enables them to see the Christ in their

"own image, ways of life, and social identity" (p.200). Additionally, the Christ is renamed Kwame which, Odamtten points out, also reflects "the anthropocentrism in Ghanaian traditional religions, which is more concerned with humanity's material needs" (p.200). Similarly Reggie Rockstone asserted that Jesus Christ was black, he rapped in the song "Keep your eyes" (2000) on the road he raps "Jhericurls baby, now that's a sin, Jesus Christ was a bibini, is what I believe in" (p.201).

Sarkodie navigates issues of morality and religiosity in his performances in manner that allows him to be perceived as a "good boy." He affirms his Christian identity, invoking God in his music to express admiration and gratitude for his economic success. In his construction of material success as a blessing, one also observes how he perpetuates the myth that everyone can attain success irrespective of their social and economic circumstances. He embodies the ethic of the entrepreneurial self, he is self-reliant (except for counting on God) and by dint of hard work he has been able to achieve success— largely portrayed as material. In a recent talk he gave on the African Dialogues platform, Sarkodie argues that a lot of African artists cannot compete internationally "because of our visuals," he blames the political economic structure of the industry. He states, "it boils down to finances and structures where we can get paid for our music so we can use the same money to invest back". He then asks people who are interested in investing in the creative sector in Ghana to come speak to him afterwards. Early in his talk he notes that when folks ask him why he is still consistent within the music scene he states, "just working hard." He continues, stating that apart from hard work and dedication he believes that "mainly people tend to lose focus and not stay consistent because of the state of mind and energy." He seemed to suggest that new

artists' defeatist mindset may be holding them back. He argues, "when it has to do with business is not just entertainment your state of mind plays a major role in what happens to your brand so instead of these new cats always thinking about what's wrong with the industry and what it could do right." He claims, instead of hearing this, he states "I want to listen to some new music stop telling me about the radio not playing your music yesterday." This type of advice parallels the way he uses his music to shares investment to young men in particular. In his song "Hand to mouth" (2015), shot in France, he advises Kofi Boakye to buy land when he gets a little money. He adds that instead of buying four bottles of champagne Kofi Boakye can secure a hundred bags of cement. He tells them to stop buying expensive cars. He advised women not to rely on their husbands for money but to look for work. The video, shot by Ikone Agency, features Sarkodie in a large mansion seated at the head of the table surrounded by young people eagerly listening as he proffers moral and financial wisdom about investing in their future economic wellbeing.

His concern with securing economic wellbeing, and perhaps, access to the good life presents a vision of what a modern life is expected to look like. This aspiration for upward social mobility can be regarded as an instance of the socio-economic imperatives to develop oneself in order to develop the nation. As state policy has been reconfigured in a way that grants primacy to the "free market," citizens are encouraged to be become entrepreneurs to secure economic wellbeing[17] to access the good life, however, that may be defined at a particular historical moment. To be sure, the government through the

[17] The World Bank estimated in 2016, that youth unemployment between the ages of 15-24 was 48% See "48% Ghanaian youth jobless – World Bank ." Retrieved from http://citifmonline.com/2016/05/12/48-ghanaian-youth-jobless-world-bank

Ministry for Business Development launched a 'Schools Entrepreneurship Initiative' (SEI) to be a vehicle to develop entrepreneurial skills for senior secondary schools.[18]

Sarkodie endeavors to live the good life similar to Diawara's (2009) figure of the "homeboy." The figure of the 'homeboy' remains a prominent reference for hiplife artists, not only in terms of dress/style but also in ways of speaking (Oduro-Frimpong, 2009). However, this must be understood within the context of how they appropriate foreign resources and deploy them locally to symbolize, what one of my co-participants described as the "American Aesthetic." As noted early, adoption of U.S. hiphop styles of dress in Ghana, for instance, were used to appeal to an elite status which was also associated with notions of modernity.

Nonetheless it is important to note that hiplife artists commodify their music in an effort to achieve economic security. One of the mechanisms to achieve this is the claim to authenticity. It must be noted that within U.S. hiphop the notion of authenticity, "keeping it real," reflects the autobiographical impulse of the genre. However, Perry (2004) suggests that in the U.S., as commercial hiphop became prominent artists were encouraged to "live out the artistic narratives they portray" (p.90). Often, these were racist stereotypes of black urbanity. As such, for Perry (2004), these forms of "authenticity" were "double-voiced, at once constituting an exploitation of racist imagery and an expression of the problems of the ghetto"(p.90). According to Turner (2013), the claims to authenticity artists express are, of course, linked to the validation of their artistic integrity. Here, Banet-Weiser (2011) reminds us about how authenticity has also

[18] See "Government to train 10,000 SHS students annually in entrepreneurship." Retrieved from https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/business/Government-to-train-10-000-SHS-students-annually-in-entrepreneurship-669216

become a branded terrain. The claims to authenticity are made in order to secure the possibility of an extended career. For instance, while it's a commonplace observation that Sarkodie embraces and panders to commercial tastes, part of his claim to authenticity comes from his early underground days where he had to freestyle and compete with other rappers on Adom FM's Kasahare Level show. Another appeal to authenticity he typically reiterates on foreign media platforms is his preference for rapping in his native language, Twi. He also operates under the assumption that rapping in Twi with good "delivery" and "timing" will appeal to international audiences.

Performing Success

The performance of success serves to validate the work of the artist. In hiplife it appears difficult to define musical success without conflating it with economic success. In a society that is increasingly defining success as material, if you are not making enough money to perform conspicuous consumption then you are not working hard enough or you lack talent. However, the performance of success does not necessarily require that the said success be attained. In other words, you can deploy symbols of wealth without necessarily being wealthy to attract more wealth (Shipley, 2012). To be sure, this is in line with the performative genre of self-branding which develops narratives that reflect the imperatives of the society to attract a higher market value.

After attaining a level of success, Sarkodie recounts how his fans have critiqued him for his materialistic songs. He states:

> My fans actually made me know where I am as at now because I was talking about money too much. And they said it, and I realized that it was true. Because I was always saying, "do you know how much I have" and the car I am going to buy and whatever. Which is like being a kid, that's how it feels like. When you start, from nowhere to somewhere. You just want to brag a little bit. Allow me to do that, but that doesn't mean I am all about that.

As observed, "bragging" is a deliberate approach Sarkodie uses to celebrate his success, and (re)produce his brand. He adds, however, that there is more to him than that and this is evidenced in his advocacy on behalf other artists. In another interview, he notes that bragging is about "competition," his promotional skin must signal his talent and success not only to his fans but other hiplife artists (Delay Show, 2015).

Bradley (2017) points out how rap is inherently combative, as MCs compete against each other lyrically to capture the best rapper title. Braggadocio becomes an important element in this of process battling other MCs, imagined or real. He argues, "Rap was born in the first person. It is a music obsessed with the "I," even to the point of narcissism" (p.179-p.180). MC's use braggadocio to elevate themselves over other rappers (p.187). Yet, Bradley suggests that rap's braggadocio was not just about the stereotypical markers of masculine success ("wealth, physical strength, sexual prowess"), but also "poetry, eloquence, and artistry" (p.189)

Additionally, Bradley (2017) suggests that braggadocio can be ascribed to the following:

> partly as a consequence of rap's birth in the battle; partly as a consequence of rap's origins in a black oral tradition that celebrates individual genius; partly as a result of the interests and attitudes of its primary creators and consumers— young men; partly as a result of it being the creation of young black men seeking some form of power to replace those denied them.(p.188)

Within this context, one may suggest that Sarkodie announces his economic success to assert his voice in an urbanity that has so long marginalized the voices of the youth.

One of the ways Sarkodie performs his success is through his fashion. Unsurprisingly, his dress style partly draws on the U.S. hiphop aesthetic— the hoodies and jackets which are not necessarily suited for Ghanaian climate. It was this aesthetic

that the rapper Manifest was referring to in his recent beef song directed at Sarkodie. Manifest raps "Tell the fashion police they can make an arrest/These boy copying the west looking a mess." The doubleness of the latter line underscores, not only what is perceived as a mimicry of the U.S. hiphop aesthetic but literally, Sarkodie's adornment of a destroyed shirt from Kanye West's expensive Yeezy fashion line. Sarkodie's response was to ridicule Manifest for wearing a kaba and slit (print dresses typically worn by Ghanaian women) in the name of being Afrocentric, when in actuality he is broke. Indeed, the prominent theme in Sarkodie's response was that Manifest was not financially successful and could only afford clothes sewn in Ghana. For Sarkodie, even though Manifest was talented, he was materially unsuccessful. Lastly, his Afrocentric jibe seemed to reflect the notion in Ghana that consuming local is "backward" and consuming foreign highlights "elite" status or in the local parlance "your eye no open".

Sarkodie's lyrical bragging is also realized or supported by the conspicuous consumption music videos afford him. Generally, Henry KD, a director, notes that artists often ask for the following elements in their videos: he states, "let's say they will demand for certain props like expensive cars, expensive costumes, expensive ladies and all those stuffs." Hafiz of DC Media, a director, makes the point: "most of the artists say big things in their music and when they come you have to portray that. You can't say you have a Bugatti and then you shoot the video with a bicycle. So I'm very fortunate to be working with some of these artists they say big things in their video [and] they give you what you what you need to portray that." Fofo Gavua notes "they want put money for music video in the sense say they … show say we put money for inside. So they want us to do a video in a big house or they don't understand that … you can put budget and it

would be about the art of it." He claims that artists who put money in their video tend to want their videos to reflect budget spent on the video— depicting expensive status symbols. Another director also points out that actually the music videos are showcasing material success. He states, "I just said it, hype, basically the same reason why there is sakawa [cyber fraud]. Same reason why, basically…it's a Ghanaian culture, male culture to make yourself look rich for the females. It's a culture for the females to demand money from males. It's all over Ghana." The latter concern about women demanding money from men is a prominent feature in hiplife music. Young men are warned to stay away from women who will use their sexuality to 'lure' them into giving away their money (see chapter 4).

The symbols of success that surfaced in my interviews, during conversations about "flashy" videos typically included, plush houses, cars and women. For instance, Ayat, the rapper, jokingly retorted, "Ghana dier s3 owor car na wo y3 guy, owor bicycle ah eb3 bow ash3 gutter mo. Motor sef no go respect you." This translates to: in Ghana if you have a car you are well-known, but if you have a bicycle they will push you into the gutter. Even the motor riders won't respect you. Babs Direction notes, "our videos are one way cos, since like last three years, all Ghanaian videos let me say 90%, have cars inside." He adds that sometimes the use of cars does not "make sense" and it appears some "underground" artists are following trends set by "top directors." In Ghana, its common to hear stories about how people are treated based on the car they drive. In this way, cars have become connected to self-branding. For instance, upcoming entrepreneurs have noted that going to business meetings with public transportation can negatively impact first impressions about you and your ability.

Yet, we must also remember that cars and houses are not only symbols of success but markers of adulthood. Waithood — "a prolonged period of suspension between childhood and adulthood"— helps capture the experience of young people who are striving to survive the harsh socioeconomic realities of Ghana (Honwana 2015). These artists, often men, announce their maturity via their conspicuous consumption of global cosmopolitan symbols. However, in much of the mainstream U.S. hiphop that some Ghanaians artists emulate, the cars, for instance, are sometimes product placements sponsored by car companies.

Cars, together with mass media, have also historically symbolized western modernity in the popular imaginary of Ghanaians. The first motor vehicle came to Ghana in 1902. It was a "paraffin-fueled and steam-driven French Gardner-Serpollet that cost £543 and was intended for Governor Mathew Nathan. The car was a symbol of luxury and Western Modernity in the Gold Coast (Hart 2016, p.1). In Ghana, Hart (2016) observes, some of the earliest indigenous owners of cars were rich cocoa famers who acquired automobiles to improve their control over cocoa business in the Gold Coast. The imported automobile was not only a status symbol for these indigenous entrepreneurs but an avenue "to expand participation in the global capitalist system, connecting even the most remote villages and farms to global networks of circulation and exchange" (p.32). Additionally, cars have also become symbols of elite political corruption: public criticism abounds about the large fleet of cars at the presidency; and former state officials who purchase state vehicles at ridiculously cheap prices. Indeed, once, the then road minster, Joe Gidisu was gifted a BMW by contractors to be used to allegedly conduct site monitoring.

Sarkodie displays the above symbols of (male) success in his relatively high budget music videos, particularly those shot in foreign countries. He can travel, hire expensive top directors, foreign and locally, acquire props such as expensive cars. Some he can afford. Braggadocio also involves the creation of performative persona who in many ways may be "louder and bolder" than real selves of the artists (Bradley 2017, p.191). This maybe attempts to participate in the spaces they have been excluded. That notwithstanding, artists can symbolically imagine themselves in these spaces and perform them in their videos.

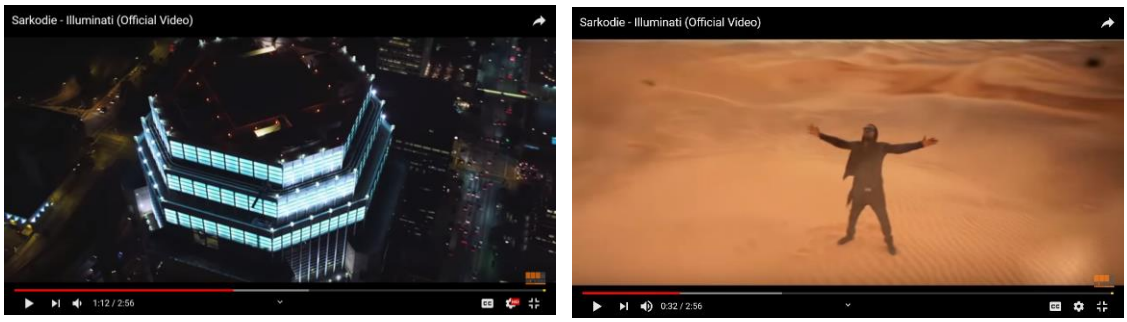

Figure 3. 3: Aerial views highlighting location in "Illuminati"(2013)

Figure 3.4: Close up of money in "Illuminati" (2013)

Figure 3.5: Sarkodie at the location in which the diamond transaction occurs

Figure 3.6: Women featured in the "Illuminati" video

The music videos shot abroad brings to mind Garritano's (2013) perceptive examination of the popular Ghanaian travel videos or what Haynes (2013) calls "Africans Abroad." In her discussion, the protagonists (often men) in early travel movies, like most diaspora Ghanaians were economic migrants. For instance, one of the initial movies, Bob Smith's "Mamma Mia" (1995) depicted African migrant workers in an Italian grape orchard picking grapes. These movies were mainly targeted at Ghanaian audiences and Africans in general. For Garritano, these travel videos movies "offered pleasures derived from imaginary travel to New York, London, or Amsterdam and tourist views of the cities' sites and spectacles." The narratives of first time African migrants in search of Western modernity refracted through the global city allowed these audiences to "virtually experience global mobility and imaginatively consume the tourist experience." Yet, in these movies, she observes, the male protagonists live a life of precarity - undocumented and navigating the harsh conditions associated with it until they go back home. However, in the typical movies shot in foreign countries the artists are positioned as consumers of the global city.

Sarkodie's video for the song "Illuminati" (2013) was shot by Phamous Philms in 2013 in Dubai and made the headlines because it was purported to have cost USD $90,

000.[19] The is song rapped over a heavy and aggressive hiphop beat which begins with an 808, bass and kick, that builds up to a crescendo of melodic elements and including other drum elements, the clap, snare and hi hat. Essentially, this structure is cycled throughout the song as the beat drops to the 808s and then builds up with the other instrumental elements. The song, performed in Twi, English and Pidgin English, is essentially Sarkodie's response to rumors that he had joined the illuminati (a secret society) because of his wealth. In the song he rejects these allegations, affirms his Christianity, and then states that his wealth is product of his hard work and God's blessings. Ironically, the central plot of the video features Sarkodie in a what appears to be a clandestine diamond sale. Further reinforcing the myth of success, the video ends with the quote: "Don't judge a man negatively by his success we all have 24 hours in a day."

In the video, close-ups seem to be used to highlight his success; there is the shot of the money in the bag (you can clearly see the denomination and currency); the diamonds; even the wire money transfer on his phone. Other close-ups are used to highlight a scorpion, camel and a snake. Low angle shots are employed to call attention to the primacy of Sarkodie. The video is also intercut with shots of a woman belly dancing in the desert and another woman who has something written in Arabic tattooed on her back. Wide aerial shots are used to highlight the location. For instance, a wide aerial shot shows a man in the desert with a falcon on his hand.

Several cues alert us to the location of the video: the supporting characters, the desert landscape, the city skyline and the close-up of the bag full of money. The

[19] See "Here We Go: Sarkodie's Illuminati video cost 90,000 dollars." Retrieved from http://www.ameyawdebrah.com/here-we-go-sarkodies-illuminati-video-cost-90000-dollars/

supporting characters appear to be Arabs, the men are dressed kiffeyehs and thawbs, while the women are in "belly dancing" costumes. The man with a falcon symbolizes Dubai's well-known historical tradition of falconry. Indeed, there is only one other black character in the video, he is one of the men Sarkodie conducts the diamond transaction with. By associating with foreign nationals, Sarkodie shows his ability to access, in this case, "high" social networks. Once again, signaling his status to his audiences. In addition, the desert features prominently in the music video, it is the first setting for his diamond transaction deal, where he acquires the diamonds from the two men. It is a barren and discrete location, homogenous brown sea of sand and Sarkodie in an all-black attire stands out from this brown background. The desert is an extension of a performance space like a concert hall or theater. The city setting is the stage for his second transaction. Aerial shots of the city at night highlight the skyscrapers, and busy highways. In the close-up of the bag of money, we can clearly make out the currency and the domination. The impulse created by the visuals seek to remind Sarkodie's audiences, particularly, his Ghanaian fans that his body is on foreign soil.

Garritano (2013) has observed that one characteristic of early Ghanaian travel video movies were their long takes of global city. For her, in these long takes the camera offers a touristic gaze by "putting exotic locations on display for their own sake." The objects of the gaze are connected to "global travel and the global cityscape: international airports, tourist attractions, city streets, and public spaces populated by other tourists." Ghanaian audiences are then able to view and experience the global city via the body and eyes of the protagonist. In this way, she argues, the tourist gaze is flipped, it is now Ghanaians who gaze upon the Westerners who have become part of the tourist

experience. They are often depicted through a stereotypical lens. For instance, in "Mamma Mia" (1995) the Italian police are depicted as racists. In addition, the travel movies offered via the screen provide "pleasures associated with mobility and consumption." This was often represented within these movies with scenes of "extravagant shopping excursions." In this way, the global city is positioned as a space of consumption experienced through a variety of "virtual mobilities and imaginary acts of consumption."

Dubai is a quintessential global city. Sarkodie's expensive video shoot in Dubai can be regarded as an investment in cultural capital. The video also serves as evidence of Sarkodie's geographic mobility, that is, his ability to purchase a plane ticket and depart the shores of Ghana to the United Arab Emirates. Dubai has been called the "Manhattan of the Arab world," it is well known for its magnificent high-rise buildings and ambitious world record breaking projects like the Burj Khalifa (highest man-made structure on land) and Dubai Mall (biggest shopping center).[20] At any rate, with regards to visa requirements, Dubai is not the most difficult place for Ghanaians to visit: visa applications are completed and paid online. Relatively, it is a simpler process in comparison to the stringent visa requirements for Ghanaians to the United States and the United Kingdom. It is unsurprising that one of his first foreign videos was in Dubai, now he has made videos in the UK and USA. Visa requirements serve as limitations for Ghanaians to access foreign destinations; in order to acquire a visa to the United States a Ghanaian must provide all manner of documents, pass an in-person interview and prove

[20]See "Sheikh of the Skies." Retrieved from http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/roads/2015/04/dubai_turns_to_falcons_to_control_its_growing_pigeon_problem.html

that she/he has connections in Ghana that will motivate their return. Hence, a social scarcity is created by these restrictions, and travel to these destinations serve as a positional good limited to a small group of people who can meet these requirements. Here, one must bear in mind that the ability to provide the required documentary evidence is no guarantee of a visa. It is within this context that I argue that travel to certain specific destinations operate as a positional good that improves an individual's social status because it is available to a minority.[21] Some hiplife artists belong to this minority, they can show their ability to travel through their music videos.

In this way, Ghanaian hiplife musicians like Sarkodie inhabit foreign locations, particularly developed countries to signal their status. Their bodies in these spaces are used to highlight their success and cement their brand as global cosmopolitan figures. In turn, this allows them to accumulate cultural capital which is then converted into social and economic capital. Sarkodie now demands more money to perform at functions. I do not seek to claim that only his foreign filmed videos grant him that ability, but I merely point out that this adds to repertoire of status signals that enable him to command higher remunerations for his performances.

[21] Schneider (2007) offers a definition of positional goods which is useful here. He defines them as goods "of which it is true that for some of the members of society part or all of the satisfaction derived from possessing them is the enhancement of social status due to the fact that such satisfaction is possible for a minority" (p.62). As such, a good can be a positional good when satisfaction is derived from the fact that it is limited to a minority and secondly, when consumption is geared towards the enhancement of social status. Hence, implying that its possession is observable by others and a shift in fashion may cause it to no longer be a positional good. For goods to be considered as positional goods they have to be conspicuously consumed. Veblen used his notion of conspicuous consumption to describe how the leisure class consumed expensive goods to distinguish themselves from the lower classes. He asserts that the leisure class's lifestyle comes to be regarded as the standard that those in the lower classes seek to emulate (Veblen, 2000, p.195).

For Sarkodie, “Illuminati” (2013) not only highlighted his elevated status, but also his expensive brand that could now garner more money from endorsements and performance fees. In the song, he raps:

> baileys foɔ contacti me, omo pɛ commercial
> half a milli, for me, never
> afei dieɛɛ oma double up, next time, better.

Here, he explains that Baileys have contacted him to feature in a commercial, they seem to offer him a million (currency is unstated), he refuses and they double the offer. Sarkodie’s brand attracts larger crowds and event promoters will have to match the price required to use his name. As noted, the video features Sarkodie involved in a diamond transaction with Emirati’s. He also promotes his Sark clothing; the belt and shoes appear prominently enough to be easily noticed. Later in an interview, he indicated that he did the video to build his brand. He noted, I was doing it for my own CV and I am not looking at just Ghana, I am looking [to] moving out” (Delay Show, 2015). He then goes on to say that, when they are playing it on BBC a “white person might even look at it and say this is a nice video. His statement reflects how local artists, desiring international notoriety, increasingly draw on ‘good’ music videos to not only circulate their image but also the image of Ghana as a whole.

Here, I want to draw attention to the way women are depicted in the video. According to Shipley, women in hiplife music are depicted as “objects of male desire whose presence indicate male success” (p.169). Conversely, there are also several songs that portray women as threats to male success. In these songs, young men are warned to stay away from these sexually promiscuous women who are only interested in their money. In “Illuminati” (2013) the women do not play an active part in the narrative, as Sarkodie never even interacts with any of them. The belly dancer and the woman with the

Arabic text on her bare back seem to serve the purpose of exoticism on display. Here, we must also note that they are not black, they appear to be Arabs. They possess light skin which in Ghana is associated with beauty. Indeed, popular music in Ghana has also been known to associate light skin tones with high status and wealth. His music video for "Pon Di Ting" (2013) featuring Banky W, shot in South African, displays a majority of the female performers whose complexions were lighter. Hence, even the physical characteristics of the female performers are carefully curated to convey and reinforce the status of Sarkodie.

The cultural producers I interviewed stated that they shot videos in foreign locations, typically more advanced countries, due to the availability of props like luxury cars, professional music video infrastructure and the scenery. One hiplife musician noted, "Sometimes you want the environment to look like…you are in abroad." In Ghana, "abroad" typically means the 'West.' For the year 2015 Ghanaian applicants to the U.S. visa lottery were the largest group to apply.[22] Another director recalls working for an artist who wanted his location to look like "yankee." They ended up shooting in one of the gated communities in the country's capital. As such, shooting in these foreign countries reinforces common sense ideas that equate development to urbanization and westernization. One may also suggest that they were attempting to create Ghanaian versions of U.S. hiphop music videos.

[22] See "Ghanaians had more applications to win the U.S. green card lottery than any other country." Retrieved from https://qz.com/961322/ghana-accounted-for-the-most-us-green-card-lottery-applications-than-any-other-country-in-2015/

To be sure, the popular discourse that connects urbanization to westernization are long held ideas that can be traced to colonialism. A widely popular junior high school social studies text, Aki Ola series which follows the official Ghanaian education service syllabus, has a whole section that talks about the "positive" impact of colonialism. The so-called positives include, development of infrastructure, hospitals, railways, roads, architecture, official language English, machines, and growth in urbanization, monetary system, and now, new system of government.

Figure 3. 7:U.S. Green Card lottery application services in Accra, 2017

The history of urban development in Accra also offers some insight here. Pierre (2012) observes the British colonialists in Gold Coast moved their administrative headquarters from Cape Coast and attempted "to create a piece of England grafted into the townscape of Accra (MacDonald 1892, 199-200)" (p.27) She observes that from 1877, the colonialist's planning and redesign were shaped by strict racialized residential segregation. Additionally, the zoning and building codes rigidly "enforced to maintain

what administrators believed to be a 'European feel or atmosphere" (p.27). Residential areas for Europeans were developed on the elevated areas in Accra. These residences were typically big houses on spacious compounds "surrounded by parks and 'green spaces.' Additionally, the European communities had various social services like the Ridge European Hospital and recreational spaces that were also buffer zones. Meanwhile, native residential areas like Adabraka and New Town "were, by established law, to be separated from the European residential and commercial areas" (29). Indeed, by law European residences were to be 440 yards away from the native areas. These open spaces, 'building free zones' were "utilized for golf courses, race courses, cricket and football grounds'" (p.29). These green spaces were also segregated, only available to Europeans for the recreational activities. Pierre (2012) argues that discourse of hygiene, health, and sanitation were typically employed to legitimize the racialized planning and segregation of Accra. With this history, what we observe is that natives, Africans, were excluded from the more developed residential spaces in Accra.

To bring this back to my argument, we must recall that music videos are important promotional tools hiplife artists use not only to sell their song but to also showcase themselves. Indeed, as one of the Ghanaian artists I interviewed in Accra stated: "To push your brand for the mileage [because] the visibility counts, radio is not a big fan of rap music, it supports more dance. Visibility is the main factor." Hiplife artists often self-fund their music videos and they are considered expensive investments. Upcoming artist, Kirani Ayat, launched a fundraiser to auction his brand of shirts on Facebook to raise money to shoot the video for his song "Dodo" (2017) featuring Sarkodie.

Music videos also serve as a platform for hiplife artists to indicate their social rank within the music industry and Ghanaian society at large (Vernallis, 2004). In fact, I would argue that as a hiplife musician your ability to afford a music video in itself is a sign of status, let alone a video shot internationally. It is relevant to note that prestige is associated with the director an artist can afford. Sarkodie has shot with several top-salary directors locally and internationally: he worked with David Nichol-Sey of North Productions; GYO Gyimah of Phamous Philms; Nana Asihene of NKACC and also top Nigerian directors like Sesan. Additionally, your ability to circulate the videos on local television stations also reflects your success since some Ghanaian television stations require artists to pay to have their music videos aired. Yet, for famous artists like Sarkodie, their brand actually allows them to get the videos on air for free. This contrasts, for instance, at 4syte TV where upcoming artists are asked to pay for expensive monthly packages that guarantees a number of plays per day; interviews; and a performance spot on the station's event stage.

Here it is important to emphasize that as an artist's status changes over time, that is when they become more famous and wealthier, their music video settings tend to reflect this. However, the settings also reflect the musical genre, and this might explain why it appears that mainstream U.S. hiphop video aesthetics of conspicuous consumption are prominent. I must note that the music video directors I interviewed in Accra informed me that most of the work they did was for hiplife artists (often men). I believe this especially speaks to the centrality of visual performances in hiplife. Indeed, I would argue that hiplife more than any genre in Ghana has pushed the creative development of the music video scene.

Notwithstanding, most of my co-participants regarded these performances as inauthentic because they did not reflect the lived experience of many Ghanaians. They believed the artists could not afford the lifestyle they were performing. (Here, however Sarkodie will be an exception since he is a relatively wealthy hiplife artist.) As such, they claimed the artists were merely copying the "American aesthetic," "emulating blindly" and as one music producer argued, "You can't act American more than an American, it doesn't make sense." For them, the 'authentic' Ghanaian experience was not the flashy cosmopolitan lifestyle, even though some Ghanaians live like that. This could suggest that the image of authentic Ghana for them is not necessarily 'modern.' However, this misrepresentation reflects an aspirational desire of most Ghanaians to experience life in a developed space. As the music producer observed, "Sometimes you need to sell hope."

Brand Sarkodie

As the discussion above shows, Sarkodie draws on his "nowhere to somewhere" story (a prominent motif in U.S. hiphop) to highlight how he attained success through pure talent and hard work, and of course, God's blessings. Subsequently, the fruits of his labor – objects of cosmopolitan consumption and mobility— are validated through his performance of success. Taken together, both of these practices are strategies for self-branding. Indeed, self-branding is epitomized in the way Sarkodie refers to himself in the third person, like a commodity he strives to appreciate in market value.

In Kojo Cue's song "Branding" (2017) he advises Ghanaian rappers to be candid to young people about the challenges of making music and its attendant economic precarity. For him, the flashiness and keeping up appearances presents a false impression of the industry and its cultural producers. He notes, "la borrow, la borrow just to keep up

with fashion." Here, he suggests, artists borrow clothes to keep up appearances. Kojo Cue's definition of branding is associated with fakeness, depicting a facade of material success which cannot be supported with the music making. Decidedly, his cautions were mostly directed at straight young Ghanaian men. For instance, he references, how the beauty of your girlfriend is all implicated in how you show status, "branding."

Branding has become a buzzword within the hiplife community and broader creative industry. Artists attempt to turn their talents, work and lived experiences into brands to attract corporate sponsorship. In 2012, Sarkodie was named the brand ambassador for Samsung, West Africa and in 2013 Fanmilk, an ice cream company in Ghana founded by a Danish entrepreneur. In an interview on the KSM television show, when asked about his affiliation with Samsung, he stated "it was more of promoting the brand Sarkodie itself, taking it to the next level, and [Samsung] is an international brand and makes it much…easier to reach out to people outside Ghana." He recognized that he could leverage to Samsung's international visibility to increase the value of his brand. Indeed, he recounts: "When they were launching the Note 2, I went with them to SA to launch it. It's a good platform me. So it's more of like just picking moves not basically the money aspect of it." The launch of the Samsung Note 2 phone in South Africa placed him on the international platform. This endorsement deal also meant that the Samsung Galaxy Pocket and Chief Hero would be customized with his wallpapers, signature and unreleased songs.

The relationship between corporations (see Osumare, 2014), particularly mobile service providers, and hiplife artists reveal a double commodification of the branded self. First, the brand generates value for the telecommunication companies by calling attention

to its products and services. Secondly, value is also extracted when artists release music and videos exclusively on telecom networks. Subscribers will have to pay for internet data in order to stream music from these platforms. For instance, Sarkodie exclusively released his highly anticipated song "New Guy" (2015), featuring the U.S. hiphop artist, Ace hood on Deezer (has special data packages), a Tigo music streaming platform. Osumare (2014), has argued that hiplife artists have become complicit in what she calls "corporate colonialism" by priming Ghanaian youth tastes for "global consumer products" (p.189).

Indeed, Sarkodie appears committed to building his brand so that it continues to appreciate. He asserts:

> What I did after I did the endorsement deals was more of investing in my own self. Just to make the brand worth more money. [Because] I would like to be a brand just like Samsung. I wouldn't like to always endorse brands... there will be a time where people will also have to endorse Sarkodie as well. So I wanted to make it a household name, not just limited to music… that is what I have been working towards since last year. So if you saw my videos you know the change in my videos and everything the perception to people and then stepping it up a little bit. (The KSM Show, 2015)

As the above excerpt demonstrates, he is astute about the utility of his brand and recognizes the sum of the considerations his fame engenders. He notes, as an underground rapper he could "say anything" however, now anything he says can be taken seriously and scrutinized. As such, he is careful not to "hurt the brand" Sarkodie. Currently, due to his fame and success, his song writing process demands he must pay particular attention to his lyrics and also the brand items he mentions in his song. He notes that "you cannot even say certain brands, or you cannot even say 'big ups to Omo, Coca Cola.' I cannot even use that to rap because now they would need to at least put something down for me to say it for them." As such, he cannot mention brand items

without compensation. To this end, his creative process is indeed commodified, which paradoxically also serves as marker of his success. In other words, for him, writing rap has become a business decision.

Beyond Sarkodie's domestic success, he is also interested in internationalizing his brand. Apart from endorsements from international corporations like Samsung, he does this through international collaborations and international concerts in Africa, Europe and North America. In fact, he has been one of the foremost artists endeavoring to place hiplife in the Global North. In August 2015, he performed to a sold-out audience at the Apollo Theater in New York, USA. He has called for greater collaboration amongst African artists so that the African brand of hiphop can become recognized globally. To further this agenda, he has collaborated with several other African artists Banky W (Nigeria), AKA (South Africa) Burna Boy (South Africa), Viviane Chidid (Senegal).

Figure 3.8: Sarkodie sitting on a throne surrounded by women in the "New Guy" (2015) video

Figure 3. 9: Sarkodie and Ace Hood performing in "New Guy" (2015)

Figure 3.10: Sarkodie and Ace Hood perform on a rooftop in "New Guy" (2015)

Figure 3.11: Warrior figure in "New Guy" (2015)

True to internationalizing his brand, he recently collaborated with the U.S rapper, Ace hood. This collaboration garnered a lot of media attention in Ghana, fueled not only by the idea of a Ghanaian-U.S. collaboration, but also the allegation that Sarkodie had paid $25,000 to Ace hood. Sarkodie would later thank the media for the hype generated due to their coverage of the controversy. Thus, Ghanaian public anticipated the song together with its music video which were recorded and shot in Miami.

According to Sarkodie, the "new guy" represents an individual who is seen as a "revolutionary" in his/her time. They do not abide by the rules and their intention to cause change. Indeed, in an interview on Starr FM Sarkodie stated that Martin Luther King, was a "new guy" during his time, and with his absence, the contemporary moment needs "new guys." Eventually, he goes onto to describe himself as one of the "new guys" of this current generation.

The song is performed in English and Twi. In the "New Guy" (2015) the song begins with the melody which is accompanied by rapid aggressive hard claps and hi hats. Sarkodie flows fast over the beats, in the spaces of the song with subdued drum and bass line. He reinforces the notion that regardless of your circumstances you can attain success

through hard work. He claims, “I made it from the slums back in Africa…” and he “Started from the bottom.” The song was recorded, and the music video was shot in the Florida Film house, Miami, USA. The music video was directed by Justin Campos, a South African music video director and the concept was developed by Candice Lee Campos (the two are married). Originally, the video was to be directed by GYO Gyimah of Phamous Philms but their schedules did not work out.

The concept behind the video is that Sarkodie’s inner warrior is let free. The inner warrior is depicted as a stereotypical Zulu (from South Africa) dressed man whose hands are bound by chains which he later breaks free from. After the inner warrior is set free, a subsequent shot shows Sarkodie siting on a throne flanked on both sides by women with black scarfs draped around their heads. The video largely takes place in a studio setting with a few shots located outside on a rooftop. It is quite unlike typical foreign filmed hiplife music videos which tend to emphasis the urban location through wide shots of the landscape. It appeared that the presence of Ace Hood is the main attraction signaling his elevated status. The collaboration is enough to remind Ghanaians back home about his current status as a producer of global culture.

In the video, one observes hyper masculinized depictions of well-built topless oiled-up black men, namely Ace Hood and the Zulu like warrior figure. Even their gestures emphasize and amplify their physique, for instance, the Zulu like figure can be observed throwing jabs in the air and flexing his muscles. Towards the end a man appears wearing a black shirt inscribed with words “They got money for wars but can't feed the poor.” Further illustrating that the “new guys” are concerned about state of poverty in the world.

Beyond this examination, I also looked at the comments of the video on Sarkodie's official YouTube account and the comments of the video teaser on Facebook. At the time this analysis was done, the number of views on YouTube were 968,474, with 1,143 comments. I retrieved 210 records from Facebook and 804 comments from YouTube. While some of the comments spoke directly about the music video others were directed at the other comments. Commenters would also compete over the interpretation of the song and the images in the video. People asked about the meaning of some of the words and received responses. For instance, the translation of portions of Sarkodie's Twi rap to English. Indeed, commenters who self-identified as Kenyans, Angolans, South Africans, Zimbabweans, Nigerians and Indians noted that they enjoyed the song even though they did not understand everything. A prominent running theme in the comments was the claim over who was the best rapper in Africa. While some claimed Sarkodie others contested that assertion and suggested other African rappers. The issue of language also emerged with some advancing that Sarkodie should have rapped more in English, particularly due to his potential international audience. While others also claimed he should maintain rapping in his native tongue.

Overwhelmingly, people posted positive comments about the music video, stating that Sarkodie was a "good rapper" and he was making Africa proud. Strikingly, people also regarded the collaboration with Ace Hood as a positive step to not only "bridging the gap" between African and U.S. rap music but also between Africans and U.S. African Americans. They would claim the song and video were "good," "dope," "great," however, most of the comments did not really explain why, hence confirming what a director I interviewed noted about the lack of depth in YouTube comments. Some

commenters also saw it as a duty to support Sarkodie because he was making African music visible on an international platform. They asked God to continue to bless him and urged him to persist and ignore the "haters." They accused the "haters" of sowing seeds of disunity by conjuring up stereotypes about Africans being inherently unsupportive and divisive. For them, Sarkodie became a symbol representing Africa, West Africa, Ghana and Community 9 in Tema. Indeed, he was representing brand Ghana, brand Africa. Thus, people boldly declared that they were "proud" to be Ghanaian and African. Ekdale (2017) makes a similar observation in his work on Kenyan music videos. In his analysis of YouTube comments of Blaqy's video, "Money Maker," commentary seemed to highlight the concern of promoting Kenya. For him, the commenters seemed to have deemed Blaqy's video a failure. It appeared that Blaqy's video negatively branded Kenya.

Nonetheless, other commenters (the "haters") of Sarkodie's video were also critical of his performance. For some of these commenters, it was pertinent that Sarkodie not perpetuate the stereotypes about Africa. Their critique, however, wholly centered on the lyrics of the song, neglecting the images in the video. For instance, people took exception to Sarkodie's reference to Tema as a slum and asked him to be "proud" of his community. In addition, some also pointed out that he was also referring to Africa as if it was a country and reminded him that he was from Ghana. In essence, as one commenter claimed, he was "disgracing Africans." Others also expressed disappointment, noting that the song did not warrant the hype that it generated. As one commenter summed up, "so this is it? mmmm" and another called it "garbage." One commenter even pointed to the lack of originality and authenticity, they noted that Sarkodie had become a "copy" of Hollywood.

From the discussion above, commenters regarded Sarkodie's international performance as directly intertwined with definitions of national and continental identity. Indeed, he was not only representing himself but the country Ghana and the entire continent of Africa. In this way, brand Sarkodie on the international stage was a metonym for brand Ghana and brand Africa. The sense of pride demonstrated by some may be attributed to the recognition and acknowledgement of a Ghanaian artist by an U.S. American artist. Others, however, pointed out his negative (mis)representation of Ghana and his childhood community. It appeared that there seemed to be a disconnect between the image Sarkodie was painting and their everyday realities in Ghana.

Similarly, in Ekdale's (2017) study of YouTube comments of Kenyan music videos, he reveals what he calls "competitive frictions, between audiences who fear 'Western' influence and those who welcome 'international' aspirations" (p.212). He shows how these commenters discursively draw on the global imaginary to depict the idea that "so-called traditional Kenyan values as under attack from the spread of 'Western' moral decay." As he suggests, for viewers, the sexual content in the videos examined signaled Western corruption of local morality with the tacit acquiesce of local artists. While others, also drawing on the global imaginary finds "global cultural production as a meritocracy." These YouTube commenters believed that Kenyan artists must be supported to attain international quality (p.223).

In Sarkodie's documentary on YouTube about his collaboration with Ace hood, he further demonstrates his entrepreneurial self-branding impulse. Touching on the issue of language, he recalls that people told him to rap in English but he stayed true to himself and continued to use Twi. In an interview on France 24, he claimed that he used his

native language because he believes music has to do with emotions and "that is the best way to express myself." Later, he indicates that even though U.S. audiences do not understand, they can still enjoy it because of his rap delivery. He indicates, "…I came to the understanding that because you guys don't know what I am talking about it has to be presented well. And that comes with delivery and timing." Indeed, he demonstrates an acute awareness of the language barrier, however, he deliberately crafts his music under the assumption that his rap delivery will appeal to transnational audiences. This deliberate commercialized move will allow his music and brand to circulate internationally. Ironically, in recent times Sarkodie employs more English in some of his songs when he originally mostly used Twi and sometimes Pidgin English.

Another insight about Sarkodie's self-branding is worth highlighting here. Appearing on the Delay Show (2015), the interviewer enquired why some musicians could not maintain their popularity. Indeed, due to general precarity of creative labor in Ghana it means the brand must consistently be "made" and "remade." He noted that because hiphop is the preference of young people, once the rappers grow old they cannot relate to their newer, younger audiences. He claimed "singers can do it till they die but rappers it's more like you need to start thinking about alternatives with time." He is well aware the precarity and lifespan of a rapper in Ghana may not be long and as such you have to invest in other alternatives to secure economic well-being. Perhaps, this line of thinking has influenced his decision to draw on his celebrity brand to establish his own clothing line, custom headphones and the recording label. Indeed, at his talk to Harvard business school he notes, you have to "brand yourself and position yourself really well."

Beyond using his celebrity brand to generate economic value he also uses it to speak on social issues, promote young upcoming artists across various genres and advocate for the Ghanaian music scene. In 2015, Charter House dubiously advertised Sarkodie as a performer at Ghana Music Awards, without his permission or knowledge.[23] Subsequently, he tweeted, "…Charter House is trying to play smart. I just want my profession to be respected where am from … And they should stop acting like we not that important…" In a country where artists in all fields are often underpaid and undervalued, Sarkodie actions sought to demand respect and recognition for musical work in Ghana. Indeed, hiplife has become a significant source of youth agency and also provided opportunities for upward social mobility. Recently, he started a road safety campaign after the artist Ebony Reigns died in an accident and his own recent experience in a road accident. He also established the Sarkodie Foundation to help children.

As noted, he also leverages his brand to generate visibility for other young artists. As such, he collaborates with a lot of local Ghanaian artists both known and upcoming. He has worked with Samini, Jupiter, Stoneboy and some upcoming artists like Wisa Gried. By way of promotion, he features these songs on his social media profiles. This is premised on the notion that when people see that Sarkodie is featured in the song they are likely to listen to it. With these gestures, he demonstrates a desire to share his success, if you will, with other artists. Here, the brand is not directly used for economic gains, however, these practices still allow him to circulate and associate his image with the latest and talented upcoming artists.

[23] See "Did Sarkodie charge Charterhouse GHc120,000 to perform at VGMA?" Retrieved from http://www.myjoyonline.com/entertainment/2015/April-10th/did-sarkodie-charge-charterhouse-ghc120000-to-perform-at-vgma.php

Social media is utilized as a tool to (re)produce his brand. Broadly speaking, it has become a powerful and affordable vehicle hiplife artists use to circulate their music and image to cultivate an audience. Sarkodie observed that the previous generation of Ghanaian rappers where unable to "move to the next level" because they did not have the technological avenues like Hulkshare and Twitter to distribute their music (Delay Show, 2015). To this end, it is safe to argue that the current technological climate in Ghana largely powered by transnational telecommunication companies played a part in his success.

To cultivate a celebrity brand, hiplife musicians produce music to amass a loyal audience. Their music must be able to attract attention through their rapping skills; however, that may not be enough and they must also actively work to promote themselves and their music. This is done so that they can attract corporate endorsers, a major source of income, who may want to reach the particular demographics the artist's brand attracts. As Jaspreet Sigh, a Samsung official, comments on the partnership with Sarkodie, "We are very excited about this partnership because we want to connect with our customers musically and we find in Sarkodie all the values we stand for and work tirelessly to achieve." However, it appears that to attain celebrity brand in hiplife, artistic skills are important but not entirely fundamental. Take for example the Ghanaian rapper, D-Black, who was nominated by BET for "Best International: Africa" 2011 when he was not well known in Ghana. Wanlov has had a running public critique of D-Black calling him out on his inability to rap. However, he is well known for his business savviness. In fact D-Black himself stated:

> I'm not a lyricist. I'm not an MC. Don't compare me to Sarkodie. I don't do what they do. Sarkodie is an amazing lyricist. Me, I'm a business man. I'm an entertainer. I make music, you dance to it and I get paid for it and I am happy for that.[24]

Sarkordie can be regarded as a performer who seeks the good life by submitting to capital while at the same time refusing to be defined by stereotypes about developing nations and their peoples. The performance of success operates to construct the entrepreneurial branded self, an identity that lives a modern life by overcoming economic structures of oppression. Although Sarkodie's artistry, undoubtedly, contributed to his rise in popularity, his fame has been solidified through strategic decisions that produce and circulate his brand. It is against this backdrop that he commercializes his artistry and leverages it to attract corporate endorsements. I contend that the commodification of his artistry is the harbinger of his successful entrée into the Ghanaian music scene. Sarkodie's commodification process entails publicity, promotion and advertising; it involves his purposeful writing of his songs; collaborations with other artists in Africa and beyond; rapping dexterity to appeal to transnational audiences; and through promotional tools, particularly music videos. Thus, through rapping and commercializing processes undergirded by the dominant cultural and economic logic, the self is turned into a brand that facilitates the attainment of fame. Nonetheless, he appears to also use his brand, through collaborations, to increase visibility for upcoming local Ghanaian artists and to speak on national problems like the three-year electric power crises that plagued Ghana from 2015. The power of his brand is channeled towards non-direct economic activities, however, this still allows his brand to circulate while it reflects the imperatives

[24] See "Don't compare me to Sarkodie – D Black". Retrieved from http://citifmonline.com/2017/08/29/dont-compare-me-to-sarkodie-d-black/

of the society that calls on citizens to be enterprising subjects who do not rely on the government to secure economic wellbeing.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have suggested that hiplife reflects the broader operation of development discourse in postcolonial Ghana. It is a key site where common sense ideas of about what it means to be developed and modern are circulated. As such, I have argued that mainstream hiplife musicians like Sarkodie construct an entrepreneurial branded self as way to access the good life. The performances of success underscore their aspiration to create distance from notions of poverty and backwardness which have been associated with underdevelopment. Male artists employ symbols of male success in the form of the conspicuous consumption of cars, houses and the display of women with normative beauty standards like light skin. These are used to create the brand and imbue it with values that echo the imperatives of the society. Further, making money and taking care of one's self is synonymous not only with good citizenship but also adulthood.

Nevertheless, these dominant ideas about improving one's self through enterprise still position citizens as neoliberal agents who are supposed to seek their economic wellbeing through the free market. Indeed, the country's adoption of neoliberal policies is said to bring development to the nation. In this way, the artist's display of material success may also construct a counter-discourse to the long-held perceptions of Africa as a place of negation. While we may observe that these aesthetic performances project imaginations of a 'developed' society they also reinscribe Ghana as an underdeveloped space, that is, within the current framework of development discourse. However, some audiences are intensely aware that some of these performances of success are inauthentic

because they recognize that even these performers may not live these lives. This, surely, also speaks to the failure of the self-branding. The saleable skin may be deemed inauthentic because it does not reflect the perceived real lived experience of the artist.

CHAPTER 4

HIPLIFE'S JEZEBELS: WOMEN IN POPULAR GHANAIAN MUSIC VIDEOS

An important contribution from the sisters of #Pepperdemministries is the reinvigoration of popular discussions on gender and feminism(s) not only on social media but in offline interactions too (are we really ever offline?). Indeed, for the past couple of weeks these issues have been dominant topics of conversation between myself and my male friends. Reflecting on these often heated exchanges, I am comforted by the fact that we are talking about gender with all the nuance it deserves. Our engagement in these dialogues exposes the various perspectives folks have about so-called gender roles. This helps challenge unspoken and unquestioned gender ideologies. These types of dialogue are particularly important for shifting our perceptions about gender. They make visible ideas that legitimate gender inequalities and may prompt folks to reexamine their complicity in perpetuating these oppressive systems. Perhaps the PepperDem sermons and subsequent conversations might change some hearts and minds, perhaps it will help some folks realize that the fight for freedom—political, economic, racial etc.—means more than the liberation of straight able-bodied men. Yes, may we all be free to live our fullest possible lives…

- Facebook Post September 25, 2017

Introduction

The feminist activists', Pepper Dem Ministries, online tactic of "flipping the script" has generated heated debates and discussions about modern Ghanaian womanhood. They have reignited a popular gender conversation. Gender and Pepper Dem's unapologetic brand of activism have become topics of heated debates in offices and on the streets of Accra. On their website, they state "[w]e are called "Pepper Dem Ministries" because we engage with the issues which are mostly uncomfortable and unpopular in our socio-cultural space. Pepper is our metaphor for truth and we raise issues which make people shift in their seats."[25] While supporters hailed them for subverting gendered stereotypes, their detractors accused them of 'man-bashing.' Their cultural impact was so great that rival groups sprang up. Sugardem Gh seemed interested in coddling (hence the sugar) patriarchy to attain women's empowerment while

[25] See Pepper Dems website. Retrieved from http://pepperdemministries.com/who-we-are/

maintaining that traditional gender roles were legitimate. They even organized a feast of jollof for men as a response to Pepper Dems' critique of the gender norms that mandate women and girls to cook.[26] Yet Pepper Dems' popularity soared, they were invited to radio shows, and eventually they launched their own radio program called Pepper Dem on Class. They would eventually organize their first major physical event that was attended by old and young Ghanaian feminists. In observing all this, I realized Pepper Dems had tapped into a deep-seated concern of many young Ghanaian women struggling against sexist gender discourses and practices that reinforced and upheld male superiority.

Efe Plange, a cultural critic and one of the co-founders of Pepper Dems spoke to me about the motivation for the creation of the group. She states, "the average Ghanaian man I have met thinks that he is pro-woman, he supports women, he loves women." She continues, these men think they are "pro-woman" because they support women's education and employment. Yet, she claims that this conception of women's empowerment is simplistic because it erases the aspects of gender inequality that occur in women's everyday experiences with sexism. As she notes, it allowed the conversation to become "too safe." Thus, Pepper Dems aims "to draw attention to mindsets" regarding ideas of male superiority and female subordination that pervade Ghanaian society. She adds, "once you draw attention to the mindset and the perceptions it brings the problem...closer and it makes a lot of [us] guilty…"

[26] See "Sugardem Gh prepares free feast for men on Valentine's Day." Retrieved from https://www.myjoyonline.com/lifestyle/2018/February-14th/live-sugardem-gh-prepares-free-feast-for-men-on-valentines-day.php

In this chapter, I am interested in exploring ideas about 'modern' Ghanaian women in hiplife music. Specifically, what the movement towards attaining development has meant for constructions of modern Ghanaian femininity. Hiplife often writes women out of modern Ghanaian history through its disproportionate focus on men as the drivers of history and progress. This male-dominated genre, like its U.S. hiphop counterpart, has been criticized for its misogyny and portrayal of women (J. Collins, 2005). Indeed, a 2008 workshop, which featured participation from feminist academics, musicians and media broadcasters examined the depictions of women in Ghanaian popular culture; the participants concluded that the messages in these songs reproduced stereotypes of Ghanaian women (Ampofo & Asiedu, 2012). The 'positive' depictions included, "the keepers of tradition, they are dependable, a source of joy, virtuous angels (usually as wives and mothers); they are (appropriately) submissive, never angry, caring, welcoming of a man's relatives and kind" (p.268). On the other hand, apart from the portraying women as sex objects, they also depicted women as "exploitative, unfaithful, unreliable, enchantresses, witches, jealous, competitive (typically with other women over men), unstable, weak minded, fickle, greedy/materialistic, exploitative, ungrateful and lazy" (p.268). Which leads Osumare (2012) to ask the question: are these negative female representations attributable to negative dimensions of globalized hiphop or sexist patriarchy in Ghana?

These negative stereotypes of Ghanaian women are what Patricia Hill Collins (2000) has described as "controlling images," as their function is to naturalize various forms of oppression (poverty, sexism, misogyny) and make them appear as if they are part and parcel of daily life (p.69). These "socially constructed controlling images"

reflect the dominant group's interest in maintaining power over the subordinate group (p.72). Within the context of the U.S. African American experience, she describes the controlling images of the mammy, matriarch, and the jezebel. The jezebel represents deviant black female sexuality.

In what follows, I also draw on interviews with female cultural producers such as models, rappers, dancers, filmmakers, feminist activists and other women in the Ghanaian music video production scene to explore issues of contemporary Ghanaian femininity. I am interested in examining how women's participation in this male dominated music video production scene is enabled and constrained. I will also examine issues around light skin valorization within the music video scene. In addition, I focus on the jezebel image in hiplife music videos. My interest is in examining the representation of Ghanaian women is to unravel how intersecting oppressions operate. The jezebel image is particularly germane to examine; it can tell us about our current social-cultural and political economic moment.

As starting point, I draw on African, Black and Postcolonial feminist scholarship on colonialism and gender. I discuss how the modern project of colonialism impacted gender in Africa. Then, I briefly discuss the history of women in popular entertainment in early post-independence Ghana. Subsequently, I examine women cultural producers in the hiplife music video today.

The issues of light skin valorization that arise out of this are discussed in the following section. Colonialism influenced constructions of beauty, which remain a gendered resource that significantly impacts women's social and economic mobility. Often, the dominant group's appearance is considered desirable in contrast to the

subordinate group's perceived undesirable appearance (Craig, 2006; Hunter, 2011). During the colonial period in Africa, European colonial ideas regarded the black African's appearance as ugly and equated true beauty with European whiteness. Her/his "wooly" hair and "black" skin color were racial markers of ugliness that set the boundary of what was not considered desirable. In postcolonial Ghana, so-called Eurocentric features— light skin and long straight hair— have been associated with a myriad of positive signifiers. To this end, it is unsurprising that many of the big name actors in the Ghanaian movie industry are biracial and display these "western standards of beauty," (Garritano, 2013). Popular music in Ghana has also been known to associate light skin tones with "high status, wealth, good living and confidence" (Teddy, 2009 as cited in Fokuo, 2009). For instance, light skinned women are heavily featured and praised for their beauty in songs typically about women. A recent example is Kofi Kinata and 2wise's song titled "Obaa Korkor" (2014) which literally translates as fair/ light skin woman. In the song, the artists sing about a light skin woman who is "the kind of girl every man needs."

In the following section, I examine the jezebel image by first tracing its historical origins in relation to its manifestation within Ghana. This image is one of the mainstays of hiplife music and its representation of modern womanhood. Then, I proceed to examine D-black's "Vera" (2012) music video through an African feminist lens. I understand the deployment of the jezebel image is used to justify intersecting structures of oppression against women. Shipley (2012) has also observed that the depictions of women by male hiplife artists are indeed a critique of how women navigate the "transition between modern and traditional life" (p.165). Indeed, African feminists have

long asserted, the woman's body not only symbolizes the state of "African morality" but it embodies anxieties about the movement from tradition to modernity as promised by development discourse.

Colonialism and Gender

Writing in the early 1990s, the famed writer and pan-African feminist Ama Ata Aiddo (1993) argued that there were three prominent elements that influence "the position of the African woman today." They included "indigenous African societal patterns; the conquest of the continent by Europe; and the apparent lack of vision, or courage, in the leadership of the postcolonial period" (p.321). Prior to that, Ogundipe (1984), drawing on a Maoist story that metaphorically uses mountains to represent oppression suggested that the African woman has "six mountains on her back" (p.129). They include: colonialism, a neocolonial condition of 'underdevelopment,' patriarchy, tradition, women's negative self-perceptions due to sexist ideas and race. Similarly, in U.S. Black feminist thought, the conceptions of intersectionality and matrix of domination have been used to examine the various ways Black women in the U.S. are oppressed and subordinated (P. Collins 2000). Patricia Hill Collins (2000) writes "Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation" (p.18). Meanwhile the matrix of domination shows how these intersecting oppressions are organized in particular locations and moments in time. Usefully, these theorizations have sought to understand, alongside patriarchy, "Third World Women's" (Mohanty, 2005) lived experiences under colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, racism and other oppressive global structures. For instance, Ogundipe (1984) has argued that new colonial economic

arrangements in African societies pushed men and women "into dependent economies resulting in the pauperization and the 'proletarianization' of the whole continent." In the ensuing labor process, women "became 'proletariat' of the proletariats, becoming more subordinated in the new socio-economic schemes, and often losing their old and meaningful roles within the older production processes" (p.130). As she suggests, colonialization exaggerated existing indigenous ideas of male superiority and also introduced new ones.

Making similar arguments, Oyewumi (2005) asserts that colonization instituted and encouraged male power which ultimately manifested in creation of patriarchal African nation-states. For instance, she argues that the patriarchal colonial state acknowledged "the authority of male chiefs while ignoring female chiefs." Further the Christianization and its attendant educational institutions targeted men in particular ways to enable them hold positions in the colonial government such as clerks and so on. As Ama Ata Aidoo (1993) recalls, "[w]hile the boys in colonial elite schools were being prepared to go to England to become professionals (mostly lawyers), girls in the equivalent schools were being taught needlework and needlepoint, crochet, and baking" (p.322). Miescher's (2005) work also shows how the Basel Mission and later the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast (Ghana), introduced a "new notion of masculinity." Men were to become monogamous husbands whose primary allegiances were to their spouses and children before their extended family. The sons of these new converts were required to go to school while it was optional, if not unexpected, for their daughters. The girls who were selected to attend school were trained "in domesticity by living with and serving European missionaries, learning about cooking, needle work,

hygiene, and motherhood" (p.76). For him, the mission schools, especially the boarding schools served as important sites to reconfigure local personhood and advance the "Presbyterian notion of masculinity" (p.76). Lastly, for the followers of the Basel Mission, inheritance was no longer organized via matrilineal lines, as was custom of Akan peoples. Indeed, due to the strengthening of existing patriarchal structures and creation of new ones, Oyewumi (2005) suggests that (native) men essentially inherited the colonial state. The mechanisms of female exclusion from education and employment held women back and promoted men. As the access to Westernized education increasingly determined one's upward mobility in the "'modern' world" educated men certainly had an upper hand (p.135).

Interestingly, now development discourses around gender equality and women's empowerment seek to promote what was has been described as the 'girl effect' (Hickel, 2014). It assumes that investing in young women's labor, in terms of skills training and access to credit, will create economic growth and reduce poverty. Drawing on ideas rooted in social-evolutionary theory, part of this project seeks to reconfigure kinship and family structures by advocating for a shift from patriarchal polygamous family structures (read: pre-modern) to a nuclear family (read: modern) (Hickel 2014). Once again, the colonialist project of transforming gender relations in postcolonial societies returns (or perhaps never ceased) imposing ideas and making new claims that this approach will lead to development.

Oyewumi (2005) argues, in her examination of Yorubaland, that colonization racialized and inferiorized Africans as natives. Yet, she argues that "for females, colonization was a twofold process of racial inferiorization and gender subordination"

(p.124). The colonial experience produced this hierarchy that placed European men at the top followed by the European women, then African men (native) and at the bottom, the "Other (African women)." She suggests that "[n]ative women occupied the residual and unspecified category of the Other" (p.122). Similarly, Lugones (2007) also introduced the "colonial/modern gender system," as way to understand how gender converges with race within processes of colonial power (p.186). For instance, colonized women were initially not ascribed a gender even as they were perceived as female. They were not accorded the features or social signifiers of femininity that were associated with white European women. Racialized non-white women were marked as inferior; initially considered animals and then turned "into various modified versions of 'women' as it fit the processes of global, Eurocentered capitalism" (Lugones 2007, p.203). Lugones argues that scholars who adopt the framework of the coloniality of power often "naturalize gender" while some white feminists simply examine gender through the critique of patriarchy, but not of colonialism (p.188). To be sure, she argues that this colonial/modern gender system is made possible precisely because of the coloniality of power with its attendant racial classification of people.

Post-independence, imposed colonial ideas about gender constructions and relations persisted. For instance, Ogundipe (1984) notes, the inherited male-dominated structures came "with them hardened attitudes of male superiority and female exclusion from public affairs which the colonial systems introduced." Allman (2004) shows how early post-independence anti-nudity rhetoric of upliftment targeted at women in the Northern and Upper regions was very much rooted in "early-twentieth-century colonial binaries of civilized and uncivilized, as well as to precolonial divisions within the north

between ‘state’ and ‘state-less,’ Muslim and ‘pagan’ (p.148-p.149). Allman (2004) draws parallels to 1930s and 1940s white “missionary feminism” and its ideas about women’s cleanliness in “uncivilized” societies which were rooted in modernist discourses (p.157). Yet, she is quick to point out that Hannah Kudjoe, who would eventually spearhead the state’s anti-nudity effort (building on her previous NGO work in this area), regarded the problem of nudity in the Northern and Upper regions as one of impoverishment and the subordination of women (p.153). A 1958 study organized by St. Clair Drake and second-year students in sociology and social administration from the University College of Ghana, revealed that while most men were clothed, women who were unclothed did express a desire to be clothed, revealing the gendered nature of the “nudity problem.” As, Allman (2004) argues, the anti-nudity campaigns placed the “women’s question” on the agenda of the national project of development.

Nudity, once considered a sign of backwards uncivilized peoples is now regarded as a sign of moral decadence due to foreign influence. As African feminists have pointed out, women’s bodies are viewed as barometers of so-called “African morality” (Lutwama-Rukundo, 2016). Ama Ata Aidoo (1993) also suggests, “that much of the putting down of women that educated African men indulge in and claim is ‘African culture’ is a warmed-up leftover from colonization” (p.324). For instance, Christianization in Africa largely introduced ideas that objectified “unclothed” women’s bodies and rendered them as immoral. Thus, Tamale (2016) argues, “[m]orally neutral female nakedness was burdened with ‘shameful sexuality’ in a way that male bodies were not; a moral link between the woman’s body, purity and chastity was constructed” (p.84) In her examination of the “Cameroon Times,” an English-language newspaper in the

federated state of West Cameroon, Mougoué (2016) argues that discussion of women's beauty rituals "was in fact about women's access to money and status; and about morality, modernity and sexual politics" (p.7-p.8). Further, women's fashion preferences for miniskirts, for instance, have incurred violent reprisals from attackers who perceived them to be unacceptable signs of negative Western influence on African morality (Hansen, 2004). Feminine beauty rituals of the "modern African lady" were regarded as a threat to "African moral fabric." In addition, legislation regulating women's dress choices in postcolonial African countries reveals constructions of femininity rooted in ideas about nationhood and national identity (Tamale, 2016).

Women as Cultural Producers

It is not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that sexist ideas and practices discussed above have impacted women's participation in popular entertainment. Largely, the history reveals how ideologies and practices actively constrained their participation. For instance, due to the reluctance to allow women to join concert parties, parts meant for women were performed by men.[27] Yet, the history also reveals how women have pushed back against gender-based exclusion to claim space in popular entertainment. J. Collins (2003) captures two insightful accounts of women popular performers in Ghana. From the 1960s, as a teenager, Vida Hynes (nee Oparabea) worked with concert parties. She recounts how the band's, Okutieku's concert group, reluctance to allow her to participate stemmed from the belief that women in their menstruation will bring bad luck to the band. Menstrual taboos forbade women from doing certain activities and going to

[27] J. Collins (2003) observes that there is historical tradition within African performances where men play women's roles. He cites, the female impersonators who perform during the Ga Homowo festival and "indigenous theatre such as that of the Mande people and the Ibo 'okorakpo' theatre with its 'drag' parades" (p.2).

particular places. Further, Oparabea was labeled an 'ashawo' (sex worker) in some of the towns they performed in. The term is broadly used to describe women who are deemed to be "morally loose." At one point Oparabea's parents had her locked up in police cells to prevent her from travelling with Okutieku's concert group. Generally, around the 1960s women performers were perceived as immoral and promiscuous.

Meanwhile Adelaide Buabeng, who encountered problems with her family, ran away from home in 1965 at the age of 16 and joined the Brigade Concert Party. She belonged to a royal Akan family who believed the concert profession to be 'hopeless.' However, she had the support of her mother who would annually offer a bottle of schnapps to the chief so that her daughter would be allowed to continue professional acting. J. Collins (2003) suggests that the ambiguous status of performers (men and women) is partly due to "their itinerant life, their youthfulness, their low to intermediate class position and the association between the guitar, palm wine drinking and drunkenness"(p.2). Beyond that, he concludes, it is further animated by Westernized ideas about high culture that deems popular music and culture as low-brow.

In J. Collin's (2003) historical examination of women popular artists since the 1960s, he attributes their rise to the following: the foreign influence of black and white performers; the policies of post-independent governments; indigenous beliefs and practices that encouraged women's cultural production; and the church platforms that encouraged women performers. From the 1960s some of the initial female performers, who significantly impacted Ghanaian entertainment, included Lola Everett and Charlotte Dada. Dada would later star in the musical film "Doing their thing" (1972) which followed a young girl who pursues a career as soul singer against her father wishes.

J. Collins (2003) argues that the 1930's solo singers connected to jazz and swing such as Ethel Waters, Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Judy Garland and Peggy Lee inspired the first crop of African female performers. One of the earliest performers was the Zimbabwean, Dorothy Mazuka, who "specialized in African versions of American jazz favorites" (Makwenda, 1990, p.5-6 cited in J. Collins, 2003, p.4) He also observes that early post-independent educational policies on culture contributed to the entrance of women into the popular entertainment space. For instance, the creation of "state and para-statal bands and theatres, the project of local performing arts through mass media and government endorsed local and Pan-African festivals" (p.5). Further, Kwame Nkrumah established the Workers Brigade Concert Party and demanded that it be inclusive of women.

Beyond the targeted cultural policies, he adds that there are aspects of indigenous practices that facilitated the rise of women entertainers. For instance, there are traditions of female performers in some African societies such as the West African female hereditary jali (jeli) or griot. J. Collins (2003) observes that many of Mali's current top stars such Fanta Damba, Fanta Sacko and Tata Bambo are part of this category (p.6). Additionally, there are some societies with practices of art making that are exclusively performed along gendered lines. For instance, the northern Ghanaian Dagomba twirling dance for men is called takai and for women, tora.

Another important avenue that allowed Ghanaian women into the popular entertainment space is the church. J. Collins (2003) notes the churches were also key during the 1970s economic depression. When the music industry collapsed many musicians went abroad while the guitar bands joined local church choirs. The churches

were also exempted from paying the heavy import duties that were levied against musical instruments and the entertainment tax. In turn, from the 1980s emerged the "gospel and gospel—highlife" guitar bands comprised of men and women in a "four-part harmony choirs singing danceable Christian songs" (p.7). Now under the auspices of the church, the guitar bands were no longer associated with a drunkenness, and consequently some families began to allow their daughters to participate in music making. From the 1980s a new crop of women performers emerged; they include Mary Ghansah Ansong, Stella Dugan, the Tagoe Sisters and more.

Women in Hiplife

Figure 4. 1: Abena Rockstar performing at the Chale Wote Festival, Accra, 2017

Figure 4. 2: Fu performing at the Black Girls Glow concert, Accra, 2017

Today, women cultural producers continue to face some of the similar challenges discussed above. Indeed, it is unsurprising that hiphop continues to be a male dominated genre across many African communities. Clark (2018) argues that the "absence of a larger presence of African women's voices within hip-hop weakens hip-hop's ability to call itself a true voice of the people" (p.145). She observes that in most hiphop communities in Africa, women artists would not begin recording till almost a decade after their male counterparts. In light of this, some women in rap decidedly took on the task of

representing African women's experiences, particularly concerns of gender inequality and injustice. To this end, African women who rap have focused on "gender issues: relationships, violence against women, women in society" and also on the social and political concerns like "corruption, poverty, and health care" (Clark 2018, p.120). Some of these African emcees identify as feminists, like Senegal's Toussa Senerap, South Africa's Q'ba, Dope St. Jude, and Gigi LaMayne (p.126). These artists, Clark observes, sometimes become the primary exposure of African feminist thought to the people in their communities. However, Rose (1994), writing about U.S. black women in rap, cautions against the dichotomous reduction of men's rap as sexist and women's rap as antisexist. She asserts women in rap cannot be placed in total opposition to men's rap discourse. For her, these women uphold and contest the sexual discourses of male rappers in various complex conflicting ways. Yet, as Clark (2018) argues, when women in rap do not directly engage with gender oppression their mere presence in hiphop challenges its male dominated narratives.

There are few women in hiplife and the music video industry in general and even fewer have attained some measure of commercial success. Several issues may account for their absence in hiplife. It is important to recall that it is generally difficult for strictly lyrically driven emcees to attain commercial success in Ghana. There is a strong privileging of dance oriented popular music. Further, rapping, with its emphasis on lyrical dexterity, has been regarded as a masculine sport; women who are good rappers are treated with curiosity because they are doing what a man can do.[28]

[28] In a rap battle event I witnessed, laden with sexist and misogynist lyricism, no women contenders participated. The concerts and events I attended hardly featured any women doing rap.

Nevertheless, some female performers have enjoyed degrees of success. Freda Rhymz, a rapper, was the first woman to win the 2017 sixth edition of the MTN Hitmaker reality talent show. Recently, Eno Barony became the first woman to be nominated for the Best Rapper of the Year at the 2018 Ghana Music Awards. Her song "Fear no man" (2018) challenges well-known men in the hiplife scene (Sarkodie, Manifest, Medikal, EL, Yaa pono, Edem, Teephlow and Pappy Kojo)[29] and debunks the sexist assertions about women in hiplife. She notes: "They told me I was a woman so I no go blow. They told me I am too weak for the role." In the song she declares herself, "the King of queens." In an interview on Zylophone FM, she states:

> …mostly when people are... talking about rappers, they will just mention the guys name and - they just put us in a box, female rappers. But whether male or female we are all rappers...I am not scared of any male rapper…Me when I am doing rap, I don't see myself as a girl though. I don't have a vajayjay when I am rapping.

When asked what do you have she proclaimed laughing "I've got balls." Eno Barony challenges (physically) and yet affirms (symbolically) the embodied masculinity ascribed to rapping. Abena Rockstar in an interview with Clark, forcefully argues against the term "female rapper":

> …why can't I be just a rapper but I have to be a female rapper? It's like you saying female president, doesn't make sense....So anywhere I go if you make the mistake of calling me a female rapper I will correct you nicely. I will let you know I am rapper not a female rapper. What makes somebody a rapper, rap makes me a rapper. So why should my gender be in the picture....so it means if you call me a female then it means when you are listening to my songs you are tackling it from a female point of view you will always be biased. And the tag female rapper is even one of the biggest points or reasons why we are not getting recognition

[29] All the artists here would not necessarily identify as hiplife artists. Indeed, most of them often transcend genres but they often make use of rap in their music making.

> down here in Ghana… See me as a rapper, not a female rapper because rap or talent has no gender.[30]

In my interview with Abena Rockstar she further explained that she does not get the credit she deserves for her lyricism. She notes "I am getting my 5000 views and 6000. People don't give me credit for the lyrics they'll go 'oh oy3 obaa nor rapi'…" The last part in Twi translates to "she is a woman who raps." She alludes to idea that people seem fascinated that she can actually rap. She insists that this unfairly detracts from her hiphop lyricism; a form of creative labor that she wants to be recognized. Further, Abena Rockstar explains that this feeds into what she describes as the feeling of being "double boxed." She states:

> As a female, they box you, they box everybody, society does that. But as female it's like you're double boxed, stereotyped...There's a song you are welcomed to do, like sexualized songs and expose your body….And if you are talking about something they love it. If you can talk about your nails and your lipsticks…They don't expect you, female, to be lyrical or be talking about societal issues…. but you are boxed because people think that for a female they can decide what you can do or maybe they think you are beautiful or sexy so this will fit you not what you want to do…"

Here, Abena Rockstar points to the restrictions the tag "female rapper" places on her and other women in rap. Importantly, it reveals that women in rap are often expected to adhere to a specific set of topics and manners of performing. She makes the point further in the interview with Clark:

> I don't believe I am a girl, I believe I am a human being and as a human being I have the right to say whatever I want to say. How I feel like saying it...for me rap is a way of expressing myself, my own way...so it means I don't have to go ...according to the conventional way or how everybody expects things to be tackled...so I am blunt.

[30] See "HHAP Episode 17: Abena Rockstar on Hip Hop and the Music Industry in Ghana." Retrieved from https://hiphopafrican.com/2017/12/02/hhap-episode-17-abena-rockstar-on-hip-hop-and-the-music-industry-in-ghana/

Abena Rockstar informed me that her biggest challenge is not money but the audience "accepting" what she does. Tinuke, a Nigerian rapper based in Ghana, also responding to the term female rapper states, "I feel like it puts people down, its like-they make it seem like it's a good thing. But they are trying to box you and so they can dismiss you." Tiniku's mixtape, titled HER, an acronym for "Having Extreme Rage," captures her anger at the society, industry and family. For her, it was about wanting to be heard, and showing the people in her life that she can do music and it is not just a hobby. When I asked if she feels like she was heard, she answered "yes" noting that the mixtape helped her meet and connect with people in the industry.

Women in the creative arena continue to face some hostility. Particularly the artists who unapologetically draw on their sexuality in their performances, but also those who have decided against particular sexualized performances. As Abena Rockstar notes "but the thing is just as you are accommodating those who are sexualizing themselves, accommodate those who also don't want to sexualize themselves. Let's be free to do what we want to do." Fu, a rapper, notes that while some suggest that this new generation of artists seemed not to be pressured to wear revealing clothes, she "[feels] like still low key no one is going to mind you if don't look ...'I want to see skin.' Like still low key people want to see it." She describes the subtle manner in which the music industry pressures women performers to draw on hypersexualized representations of femininity, but also stigmatizes them for doing so. Many women, who do not want to draw on these dominant sexualized scripts, aim to ensure that their lyricism remains the focus of their work. The paradox is that while the industry encourages open display of sexuality for success it also sets women performers up for public shaming. Clark (2018) makes similar observation in

her study. She notes, some male rappers "were willing to give legitimacy to the music of their female peers, unless those female peers have presented themselves in appropriate ways" (p.136). In this way, she notes, these rappers were describing what Cheryl Keyes calls the Queen Mother image of women in rap.

Keyes (2004) in her historical examination of U.S. rap, identifies four types of categories of women in rap, they include, "Queen Mother," "Fly Girl," "Sista with Attitude," and "Lesbian." She notes that Black women emcees moved between these classifications and could also embody more than one at the same time. These categories reflected the lived experiences of black women in urban U.S. society. For instance, the rappers in the category of Queen Mother drew on Afrocentric depictions that reflected in the way they dressed and their self-definitions as queens with "intellectual prowess" (p.266). With the "Sista with Attitude" category, women drew on "attitude as a means of empowerment and present themselves accordingly" (p.272). For instance, a number of them would reclaim the term bitch from its negative gendered sphere and use it as a positive term for entertainment or a cathartic release.

The fly girl category featured those who sported fashionable trendy clothing and hairstyles, make-up and accessories. The fly girl image emerged out of the Blaxploitation films of the late 1960s through the mid-1970s. Yet, as Keyes (2004) notes, around the mid-1980s women in rap began to challenge the image of the fly girl because they wanted their listeners to shift attention from their looks to their lyricism. The fly girl persona contested racialized beauty ideals that positioned aspects of black women's bodies as undesirable. In their performances, artists like Salt-N-Pepa deliberately accentuated their breast, derrière and thighs elements associated with beauty and positive

sexuality within Black U.S. culture and also within continental African. Additionally, these artists depicted the fly girl not only as a party girl and independent woman but also as "an erotic subject rather than an objectified one" (Keyes, 2004, p.269).

On the other hand, there are some women in the music video scene who draw strength from forms of hyper-sexuality. Some of these artists I interviewed, have pointed out that they do not care about the public shaming and backlash. Esther, a dancer featured in over fifty music videos, commenting on the criticism she receives for her dressing and performance states, "right now I don't care about what anybody says. It's about the passion and its entertainment so I would just do whatever I think I would do to get us there. Because most of the girls have this same look." She notes that she gets backlash from her dressing "all thing time." She recalls, "when I was fresh in the industry, I really used to feel so bad about it. Like people criticizing me for a lot of things, but I realize that …I didn't give a fuck about anyone."

The theme of public criticism was also the focus of Eno Barony's song "Obiaa ba ny3" (2017) featuring Ebony. The title loosely translated means "everyone's child is bad." In the song, Eno talks about the criticisms against her which focus on her decision to do music; asserting that she cannot be controlled and reclaiming the notion of being "bad." Ebony, a self-declared leader of the bad girl movement, faced severe public criticisms over her music and overt sexualized performances. Ebony boldly declares in an interview:

> I don't pretend to be who I am not. I am a very bad girl and there is nothing anyone can do about it. And I am proud to say it. I have nine piercings and a lot of tattoos all over my body and this is how I want to live my life[31].

Her song "Sponsor" (2017) addressed issues around transactional sexual relations between younger women and older men. Unfortunately, she would die in a road traffic accident just as her career was rising. Unsurprisingly, so-called, Christian prophets came out seeking to associate her untimely death with her sexualized performances.

Khadi, a hiphop choreographer, commenting on nudity and sexualization, notes: "Personally I am pro nudity, I feel like your body is yours you can do what you want with it, if you feel like you look nice enough for the whole world to see it that's your problem." She adds,

> I feel like, women especially, there are too many rules governing how we should act and what we should- like one of my aunties was like Jaz, 'you've done really well but make sure you don't expose yourself.' I was like 'what do you mean?' 'You know those short shorts'...I am like 'I am dancing and I'm wearing shorts. I don't see what I am wearing should take away from what I am doing.

These women who defy conservative ideas about women's fashion choice face a lot of backlash. As Khadi points out "Ghanaians talk too much." Public shaming and physical violence have been used to discipline women deemed to be dressing inappropriately in overt sexualized ways in public. These conservative ideas about the covering of women's bodies are partly rooted in the moralizing discourses traced to the Christianization and Islamization of African societies. Interestingly, "unclothed" bodies were also associated with paganism.

[31] See "I'm bad and proud – Ebony." Retrieved from https://www.graphic.com.gh/entertainment/showbiz-news/i-m-bad-and-proud-ebony.html

While women face public backlash for their performances, sexualized or otherwise, they also have to deal with the men within the industry who may perceive their performances of sexual availability as invitations for sexual engagement. For instance, a model organizer informs me that some of these men will call her and request women to sleep with. She notes, "…some of them will just call you, I want a girl to sleep with. Can you give me some of your girls?" Recently, Feli Nuna revealed in a radio interview that she rejected working with some record labels because of the demands for sex and sexual harassment. She stated, "I want an executive producer who does not want to sleep with me but who wants to bring me money and work with me."[32] In Fitts (2008) study she observes a similar practice where some directors use the music videos as means to find women. This organizer informed me that at times these young models may engage in transactional sexual relations to secure future employment opportunities or other material benefits. Music videos are shot often and they are transitional spaces for young talent to build professional relationships and portfolios.

There are a few more points to make here about dancers and models in the music video industry. Khadi, a hiphop choreographer, asserts that there is a lack of understanding about the artistry of choreography and hence they are often not an integral part of the creative process. She makes the point,

> they don't understand that creating choreography is just as difficult as writing a poem, writing a script it's a creative process. It's like creating something new...So they don't understand the work that goes into all of that that is why they don't respect us...which is very unfair.

[32] See "Record labels bugging me with sex demands – Feli Nuna." Retrieved from https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/Record-labels-bugging-me-with-sex-demands-Feli-Nuna-726568

Esther, the dancer, recalls how sometimes she and her group do not even receive the song ahead of time to develop the choreography before the shoot. She states "…like they tell you 'oh you are a professional so just get on my set, listen to the song and do it.'" During my observations of a low budget music video shoot, I witnessed firsthand how the dancers were given the song minutes before they were to perform. They rehearsed minutes before the scene was to be shot while the director was filming the artist performance. What is interesting to note here is that they were likely not fully aware of what type of music they had consented to perform to. This reinforces how representations of femininity in hiplife music video production is largely in the hands of men.

Sometimes the song has not been officially released and these are attempts to prevent it from leaking. For instance, Khadi performed in a shoot where the actual song was played when she about to perform. She notes ,

> so when it was time for me to be shot they were like ok we are playing the song and they gave like a rundown of what... 'it's a love song so and this is your role in the video, so do it.' Which is inconvenient, but I mean ...it was literally as it was rolling.

Esther offers some insight into her typical process, it follows:

> …mostly when you call me for a shoot, I am gonna ask you what costume do you want? How you want us to look on set? And secondly are you going to provide the costume? The location? Then we talked about the budget for everything...maybe you would love us to rehearse with the celebrity, the artist will would be dancing for...That one too comes with a charge. So normally you pay half payment for everything. Then after we are done on set, you pay the rest.

Generally, there is sense amongst the dancers I interviewed that their craft is also not respected. Khadi again notes, "they don't respect dancers here so there is no contract." She adds:

> …they treat as props rather than as part of the creative process. And because we are props, let's say you get the shoot and you're like 'oh wow we need black shoe[s].' You just walk into a store and buy black shoes and bring back to the shoot. That's how they treat dancers, 'oh wow we need a dancer at this point.' So they just go looking for a dancer, buy the dancer and bring them to the shoot. Based on that, they don't expect you to come with a charge or like a - they don't budget you into the whole thing. They just come with a price that they see fitting.

She conveys the idea that dancers, mostly women, become mere objects placed in the video like 'eyecandy' and are not an integral part of the conceptual foundation of the video. Similarly, Elisabeth, a choreographer asserts,

> people can really waste your time and for me if you want to shoot a video were there are girls bouncing their booties or whatever, anybody can do that. There is no need to for me to be involved in that kind of project.

Anita Afonu, a documentary filmmaker, has turned down requests to shoot music videos partly because of this formulaic type of objectification of women dancers. She notes, commenting on the lack of storytelling in the videos in Ghana, "too many times it's just women dancing being very sexual and it doesn't go beyond that's just what it is." What has been called the "booty video" is formulaic mainstay of rap music videos (Fitts, 2008). The point here is that the songs already objectify women in particular ways. For instance, in some songs, men catalogue women's body parts they find attractive, such as the derrière, breasts, thighs etc. The female dancers seemed to be placed in the videos to heighten sexual appeal and create controversy. What seemed to be a problem amongst some dancers was the dominance and narrowness of this particular depiction of female sexuality. In my observation on production sets, it seemed that while women were simply meant to shake specific parts of their bodies, men were to show their physical dexterity by flipping, rolling and engaging in other challenging dance moves.

During my interviews, the terms model, girl and video vixen came to be used interchangeably to refer to the women who performed in music videos, though the latter was used less. Johnson (2014) observes that the video vixen in U.S. popular imaginary has come to represent

> Good hair, firm breasts, round ass, slim waist, and pouty mouth, she is beautiful according to European and African American standards. She is both reprimanded and applauded for her roles as the model, the part-time prostitute when necessary, the vixen who steals married and taken men. She personifies sex.

In many ways, these ideals also hold true in the Ghanaian music industry. Beyond light skin valorization there is also a preference of curvy women with rounded derrière and firm breasts. A director informs me about how he records models for his casting model book:

> I focus on the facial appearance, you know music video vixens do not have pimples, they don't have all those things- smooth and brighter faces. And then sexy shape and all those things. The major key features I put it [in] my notes.

Akosua Hanson, founder of a Pan-African feminist drama group, Drama queens, comments on the objectification and sexual agency of women in Ghanaian music videos. She informs me that we should remember that for these women this is their work. They get paid to dress up and perform. She adds, "that is empowerment, that's her job so how do we just rubbish also her decision to do this in the name of objectification." She cautions that we also have to hear what these women say about the work they're doing instead of just simply claiming they're being objectified. However, she recognizes how these dancers are represented and preference for these particular representations remain largely in the hands of the directors who are mostly male. In my study, I was hard pressed to find female music video directors, but I did have the opportunity to observe a music video shoot directed by a woman. In fact, this was her first time shooting a music video

as the main director. Thus, in my research, I quickly realized that men tended to be directors, cinematographers and editors while women often occupied roles as the make-up artists, stylists and assistants. Furthermore, one director pointed out that proportionally male musicians tended to make more music videos than female musicians.

Akosua Hanson's makes an important point about recognizing that these dancers and models are working, even though a number of them do it on a part-time basis. Indeed, the pay for models and dancers is typically low and they often operate from a place of precarity. Esther, a dancer, notes how sometimes agreed upon prices are not paid in full. Khadi also asserts they are not paid well, they earn between Ghs 150 and Ghs 500 for a one day shoot and often they do not enter into employment agreements without contracts. One dance group informs me that some of their members teach dance to private schools and churches to supplement their income. Models typically earn between Ghs 100 to Ghs 300, but some can earn up to Ghs 3000. The latter is usually reserved for women with established images as models. The rapper Guru refers to them as "designer girls." Sister Debbie, mixed race model and artist, demands directors to include her name as featuring in the music video. Dancers and models are often asked to bring their own clothes to the shoot. As Khadi states, "basically they want you to go look in your closet and create your own outfit and bring it. … So they don't even budget your outfit and the fact that you are bringing your own outfit to the set." She tells me that she has never been given an outfit for all the video shoots she has performed in. A model organizer, informed me that models are reluctant to wear bikinis partly because of the pittance they were offered. She notes,

> …there is no way you will tell a lady to come and wear a bikini for a shoot and you pay them Ghs 100. It's not that- even normal clothes the person takes Ghs 100. So if it is a bikini to me I think it should be better maybe 300...it's not easy. Bikini is just pant and bra.

This insight helps us understand how the female body is directly tied to profitability. Specifically, it constructs this idea that the more skin women are willing to show, the more money they can potentially earn. The commodification and hypersexual performance of femininity illustrates some of the dominant demands of the hiplife music video industry. Lutwama-Rukundo (2016) reminds us that the outfit finally selected for a performance may reflect "the aspiration of the most powerful agent involved, such as the performer, costume designer or producer, or a negotiated compromise that variously serves the competing needs" (p.5). More often than not, the people in charge of making demands about what type of performance and appearance is needed for the video are men.

Fu, an upcoming rapper yet to shoot her own music video, makes another point, arguing that we should understand the power of feminine sexuality. She believes that "we should switch the narrative" that accuses women of attention seeking when they openly display their sexuality. She adds, "wow who is this woman who can get like ...just do this thing and men are literally tweeting about it." For her, acknowledging the power of female sexuality whereby it compels people to stop their lives to actually talk about women reveals the power of feminine sexuality. In effect, Fu suggests that its ability to demand attention is also an expression of power that is often overlooked. She informs me, "I am passionate about women and I need women to be passionate about themselves." She adds, "…I need to get women to appreciate themselves because I think appreciating them myself is not enough so they need to…" Fu is speaking about the

significance of women's self-definitions in overcoming imposed sexist ideas about women's inferiority. To that end, Fu believes artists are important to social transformation. She argues:

> …I feel like if you ever get the chance to make music and you ever get the chance to be put on a stage where everybody is watching your every move you should be privileged to know that this is a place of power that you can do anything to change someone's life at this very moment.

She speaks to ways in which women in hiplife aim to draw on the agency hiplife affords to effect social change. Hiplife music also offers female performers a platform to draw on the power female sexuality to challenge patriarchal sexual scripts.

Further complicating the notion of female sexual agency, one notes how the industry appears to be at once structured to demand particular visible displays of female heterosexuality while invariably setting women up for public admonishment. At the same time creative decisions remain largely in the hands of the directors and artists who are often men. At times, dancers and models have very little say in how they will finally be represented at the end of the editing process. They may not know or even be aware of the other elements added to the video after they have filmed their performances. One model I spoke to never got to see the video before it was finally published. And when it was published she only learnt about it when her friend sent her the link. Some directors claimed they showed the videos to models and dancers before it is finally released but it seemed unlikely any major changes will be made if they are not happy with their look or performance. Another director told me he shows the treatment to the models and dancers before the terms of agreements are made and on the day of the shoot these performers were given the opportunity to see their captured performances on set.

Rose (2004) observes that in U.S. commercial hiphop, some women who rap broadly "follow the larger pattern of hypersexualized, objectified terms reserved for black women in the genre" (p.123-p.124). For instance, rappers like Lil Kim and Foxy Brown draw on "their sexuality as the basis for their image." For her, while these images appear to depict the power of female sexuality they nevertheless employ exploitative sexual imagery and narratives similar to those used by their male counterparts. Rose (2004) argues that this approach actually draws on and promotes masculine sexual fantasies of black female hypersexuality and their talents at pleasing men. In other words, they "embody forms of femininity empowered by masculine standards in order to express their power" (p.124). Rose suggests that black women, marginalized and denied accesses to represent their experiences, often have to rely on "sexual excess" to become successful in commercial hiphop (p.124).

Banet-Weiser (2015) also reminds us of the distinction between the politics of visibility and the economies of visibility. The politics of visibility typically aims to make legible political categories that have been previously marginalized in various systems and structures such as media, policy and more. The essence of making these categories visible is to enable a social change in their conditions of existence. Importantly, visibility is not the end unto itself but the path to change. For instance, the representation of women in rap can become a platform to address intersecting oppressions of racism and patriarchy embedded in a particular matrix of domination. However, she argues that the economies of visibility have transformed the politics of visibility. Within this logic, for instance, the visibilities of race and gender have become the end in itself thereby truncating politics that can lead to social transformation. The point here is not to assume that the visible

sexually liberatory representations of women are speaking to or working towards transforming oppressive patriarchal structures that attempt to control women's bodies. In other words they are not automatically antisexist representation of women's sexuality. As pointed out, a number of the representations of female hypersexuality are often filtered through male heterosexual desires and fantasies. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore that these representations transgress conventional ideas about morality and modern Ghanaian womanhood. They invariably work towards producing possibilities for more liberatory performances of sexuality in general.

Shipley's (2012) work shows how the agentic affordances of hiplife are also gendered. Male hiplife stars like Reggie Rockstone can draw on "gendered narratives of success in fashioning a new popular aesthetic of masculine urban consumption" (p.81). Yet, the public response to Mzbel's sexual assault revealed the constraints on this "gendered agency under conditions of liberalization" (p.168). Public sentiments about her assault claimed that since she dressed and performed in a sexually provocative manner she had invited this violence (Shipley, 2012, p.163). This type of sexualized violence is not new in Ghana, women have been stripped and assaulted for their choice of clothing or when they've been suspected to be thieves.

The preponderance of music videos with women dressed in revealing clothes at times affects family support for women who want to be models and dancers in music videos. A model at a party shoot noted, "Someone like me, I don't want my parents to know I do video clips. So Anytime I go and they call me to dance. I don't go where the camera is. I always hide behind." She adds, "…my daddy doesn't like me doing video clips. But I want to. And me being in it doesn't mean I have to do the nude part. I am

different." Johnson (2014) captures a similar experience in her performance as a model for Nelly's music video: the desire to be distinguished from what she described as the "video hoes" was a way to protect her "fragile identity" when her presence in the video is noticed by people she may know.

At this same party music video shoot, several models actively evaded being fully captured by the camera by hiding in the background of the set. A director, who sometimes uses Instagram to look for women models notes "mostly the girls don't want to be in videos because they will say 'oo my mum will see me...my dad will see me, my parents don't want me to be in videos'." A model organizer for videos informed me, "she doesn't do the music videos herself "because of the money. And I don't do it myself because my mom don't like it. My mom always [goes] like 'the ladies are naked and the guys are decent. Why?' That is the question my mom [keeps] asking me."

An interesting point worth noting here about models employed by this organizer. She informs me that most of the models she employs are tertiary students who live with their parents. When school is in session, they are often living in campus hostels as such they have more freedom to work on shoots particularly those that go deep into the night. She states "you see most of them…live with their parents but if school [is] in progress they don't complain because most of them are in the hostel and all that. But if we are on vacation they go home." Parental surveillance, for these young adult women, impacts their ability to fully participate in music videos.

Mainstream media coverage of women in the creative space can be particularly sexist and hostile. Often questions are geared towards their sex lives, relationships, and bodies. There is very little effort to talk about their creative work. To illustrate this point,

out of list of thirty-one questions from a Pulse Ghana interview with Rosemond Brown about fifteen focused on her body and intimate relationships. Amongst the questions asked included:

> Still on the outfit, people complained about the outfit, if the outfit actually worked with your body ...cos people saw things that they spoke about that I cannot say...do you think it was a right pick?...Recently we heard that you have a house which was bought for you by a 50-year old man?...So you didn't say in an interview that your big man bought you a house?...Your 50-year old man, if I may ask, is he the father of your son?

Eno Barony in an interview with Zylophone was asked about her virginity; whether she was a bad girl, which the host described as somebody who smokes; and also if she knew how to suck.[33] He also asked if men "worried" her because as he stated "you have all the assets, the boobs and the backs and all...do they worry you? Everybody wants to net you?" Akosua Hanson argues that "mainstream Ghana is very misogynistic." Another artist I spoke to recalls her experience with a journalist. The artist explains, "[the journalist] said things I didn't say and put them in quotations and when I questioned her as to why, she said oh she wanted to 'make the story nice and complete.'" Due to this some women in the creative space now avoid doing interviews all together. While the media commodifies female sexuality to engender controversy which helps them garner attention, their sexism appears to also attempt to discipline women they consider morally loose. The emphasis on their bodies, sex lives and intimate relationships serves this dual function. Public admonishment, rooted in Ghanaian sexism, is lip-service to patriarchy while they still produce controversial content to attract viewers and listeners.

[33] See "Eno Barony Best Female Rapper in Ghana freestyles on Zylofon fm." Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAxoxxyxroc

As noted above, women, as a social group, come to embody ideas about the status of morality in the community, family and nation (Dosekun, 2016). For instance, the patriarchal anxieties expressed in the narratives about 'city women' and 'rural women' can be described as metaphors for modern and traditional womanhood. Hungwe's (2006) examination of the historical constructions of "respectable and unrespectable" femininity in Zimbabwe offers some insight here. For Hungwe (2006), feminine mobility during the colonial period becomes important in defining who is and who isn't a respectable woman. For instance, women who stayed in the rural areas and continued to submit to the authority of local patriarchs were considered '"respectable." Respectable women were also those who had left but returned occasionally to the rural areas. However, she argues that those who "ran away" to experience urban life and its relative freedoms were deemed "unrespectable" (p.38). The patriarchal anxieties around notions of modernity (often as westernization) manifested in the way modern women were constructed as a threat to the African social fabric; particularly the social the status of men. The representations of these anxieties are most evident in the construction of the image of the jezebel.

Race, Gender and Beauty

When Nasara, the winner of the 2009 edition of Ghana's Most Beautiful was quizzed on the Delay Show (2013) about her light complexion, she responded "I chose to tone my skin and I don't think it's a problem, [because] if it were a problem to me, I won't do it …I love it." [34] Asante (2016) has observed that "[s]kin toning is utilized in place of skin bleaching to distance users from the negative connotation usually associated

[34] Ghana's Most Beautiful, organized by TV3, is championed as an alternative to other beauty pageants because of its emphasis on 'Ghanaian culture.'

with women who engage in the practice of skin bleaching" (p.5) Due to the real and perceived benefits of whiteness, skin bleaching, lighting and toning remains a significant social practice in contemporary postcolonial Ghana.

During my time in Ghana, Nivea would incur local and international outrage because of their Natural Fairness Body lotion billboard.[35] The ad claims that their lotion is "For visibly fairer skin." It featured Omowunmi Akinnifesi, a winner of the Most Beautiful Girl in Nigeria. Ghanaian rapper based in the U.K., Fuse ODG, Nana Richard Abiona, started an online campaign, #PullItDownCampaign. Nivea would eventually pull down the problematic billboards after the public outrage. I was interviewed for a Newsweek article about this because I had tweeted an image of the billboard. I was asked how I felt about the billboard, I responded, "I feel like it reflects our inability to deal with our colonial past and the residual impact—colorism."

Here I want to turn to beauty as way to articulate local constructions of race and gender in postcolonial Ghana. As Taylor (2016) suggests, "modernity was, in significant ways, a racial project" (p.8). Pierre (2012) also reminds us that "[a] modern, postcolonial space is invariably a racialized one; it is a space where racial and cultural logics continue to be constituted and reconstituted in the images, institutions, and relationships of the structuring colonial moment" (p.xii). My interviews with music video directors in Ghana revealed women's appearances received more scrutiny than their male counterparts. This is similar to Fitts' (2008) study of hiphop videos in the US; she cites one director stating "It's all about the hot girls" (cited in Fitts, 2008, p.218). In my work I observed firsthand

[35] See " 'Nivea Ad For 'Visibly Fairer Skin' Sparks Controversy In West Africa." Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/10/20/558875377/nivea-ad-for-visibly-fairer-skin-sparks-controversy-in-west-africa

light skin valorization impacted how women models were selected for shoots. Thus, I suggest that by examining the operation of light skin valorization we can gain insight into modern day construction of Ghanaian womanhood. I am also mindful, as Tamale (2016) has asserted, that society employs "women's bodies as a battlefield for cultural-moral struggles."

Beauty is an ideological construct. Feminist scholars have disagreed on the meaning women ascribe to beauty. Some posit that beauty is part of a "structure of oppression." These scholars argue that women regard themselves as things to be "looked at and acted upon" (Young, 1980 cited in Craig 2006, p.162), and they utilize cosmetics, diets, skin whitening creams and a myriad of practices to attain beauty. Others argue that beauty is a form of female agency in which women derive pleasure. Further, some scholars assert that women change their appearance to feel normal instead of beautiful, as such women's body work should be observed as "identity work" instead of "beautification" (Craig 2006, p.164). Drawing from these insights, Craig (2006) suggests we consider beauty as a "gendered, racialized and contested symbolic resource," in which at any particular moment there can be multiple competing standards of beauty. In this way, we can discern, for instance, how gendered and racialized aesthetic ideas like light skin valorization and long straight hair appear to attach value to whiteness in Ghana (Pierre, 2012). Craig (2006) asserts that this approach will allow us to consider how beauty standards and their application by both men and women operate in particular social contexts. Tellingly, this approach enables us to locate specific practices and discourses of beauty in relation to the power dynamics within a particular society (Craig,

2006). By doing this we do not fall into the limiting dichotomy of beauty as oppression or a form of female pleasure.

Understanding beauty in this way helps us examine the intersecting operations of gender and race in the Ghanaian music video industry. It enables us to see how casting choices based on skin tones impact which female models secure employment, and hence some measure of economic and social mobility. In this way we can begin to understand how beauty standards upheld by racialized aesthetics contribute to gender and racialized inequalities within the music video industry.

As Pierre (2012) notes beauty rituals such as skin lightening in Ghana offers insight into local ideologies of race, where value is attached to whiteness. Importantly, she notes, skin whitening as local practice of racial aesthetics "reveals common ideas about the transnational significance of race" (p.103). Asante (2016) has also proposed the idea of "glocalized whiteness" to help understand local specific configurations of whiteness. For him, attention should be given to the "embodied intersectional performance of whiteness through the local discourse used to describe light skin and whiteness such as skin toning." (p.5). Skin whitening, Pierre (2012) notes, is less about trying to be White and more about trying to be less Black or dark. She reminds us that today's skin-bleaching practices are rooted in "the modern development of the commercial cosmetics industry" (p.110). For instance, chemicals and cosmetics for skin whitening can be traced to ancient Greece and the use of white lead (ceruse) for their skin. It is important to note that historically this desire and attempt to attain "real Whiteness" originated amongst white women, and only later transferred to black and brown women (p.113).

Blay (2010) explains how early European men married local women and had biracial children, who were able to receive certain privileges like western education (p.369). In addition, she adds, during the time the British used indirect rule, many of the colonial district commissioners were biracial. As such, these biracial individuals came to represent the elite in Gold Coast (former name of Ghana). Consequently, in Blay's study, her Ghanaian participants associated light skin with European ancestry, "cleanliness, beauty, attractiveness, femininity and modernity." She concludes that even though the primary motivation for the women who bleach is to be perceived as beautiful, light skin in the Ghanaian society serves a number of functions. Light skin enables women to gain access to specific social networks and it also helps them attract attention. Further, light skin serves to arouse male desire and also enhance marriage opportunities. Women in Ghana who believe light skin is attractive are not necessarily fools or irrational, indeed, they are fully aware and guided by the cultural and historical foundation associating light skin with whiteness. Thus they aptly navigate a sociocultural terrain riddled with narrow racialized ideological messages about the beauty of black women (p.79). Lastly, for Blay's participants, lighter skin served as social capital that impacted their quality of life. For instance it increased their chances of securing employment through the social networks they were able to access. As such, beauty characterized by light skin enables upward social mobility and access to the "good life." In this way, Blay asserts that for black women, light skin regarded as beauty can also be equated to power. In other words, it's a resource that enables economic and social mobility within postcolonial Ghana.

While I am mostly concerned with skin color, hair is also a physical attribute of racialized distinction. It is also symbolic in the sense that racial ideologies place social

values and meanings on biological characteristics (Mercer 2000). Thus, considered within this context, natural black hair has often been associated with negative connotations. In the past, it was common to refer to black hair as woolly and tough, historically black hair has been denigrated as a sign of blackness, similar to skin color (Mercer 2000). Unlike bodily shape or facial features, the malleable nature of hair allows it to function as an important racial signifier and makes it a delicate area of ethnic expression (Mercer 2000). To this end, hair and skin are considered principle physical factors of beauty amongst women.

"They Like Using Girls Like Me, Light Skin Girls"

In my interviews, most female models I spoke to acknowledged that usually lighter skinned women were chosen for the lead female roles. In fact, one light skinned model interviewee noted that she rarely has to audition for roles as she is typically called to appear in the videos. She stated, "they call you and say maybe I need a girl who is medium size and who is fair." She adds:

> I don't know why they choose the light skin over dark skin. But when it comes to something about slave trade, something very archaic, something very African then they look for very dark girls and sometimes they prefer, even if possible, if they get a fair girl and then they see a white lady or a half-caste, they choose the person over you.

Another light skinned model responding to what type of women she sees on screen, stated "oh they like using girls like me, light skin girls." I further enquired if she was conscious of what her light skin meant in a place like Ghana. She answers:

> I kind of forget which is a bit bad, you're not supposed to forget right,...but right now when I was about to say it then I realized that ah. Sometimes it annoys me, especially if I am in a video and all the other girls are also light skin. I feel bad that I am part of that. Because it's awkward, it's not good. Do you get me?

> Because I am not trying to encourage girls to bleach and become like me. Even if you bleach, it won't become like -it will become whiter than me.

Here she touched upon two important considerations: models sometime lack control over how they will be represented in an end product, and they remain acutely aware of the consequences of the predominance light skin models in music videos. She later recounts a recent music video in which she features. She notes that it was after watching the video that she realizes there was another light skin model. She reminds me that that this particular director is "obsessed with light skin." Models are not the only ones, a dancer informed me, "honestly, I am fair too and feel like that's another reason why people pay attention to me." She adds, "… I feel like that should not be the main reason for wanting me on camera. It should be about what I am doing and not how I look."

A participant I interviewed who recruited models for music videos also echoed a similar position, stating:

> most often they do ask for light skin girls instead of the dark skin. As at now... I don't understand the situation. Why, we are all blacks and they always ask for the light skin. ....on my side I do mix them with the black and white.

She later adds that due to this preference, "most girls have started toning their skin with creams and soaps…" Efe Plange, a co-founder of the Pepper Dem, recalls her experiences going for auditions:

> I've gone for mainstream auditions for TV presentations for acting and all of that. And I think that there is so much ...I mean for main characters and all of that you see a certain inclination towards light skin women or women who were willing to tamper with their skins...you see an undisputed discomfort with natural hair. You see ...and then when it came to language and delivery it was an inclination towards certain accents.

When I asked an artist about the significance of skin color in casting he stated, it's "99% important." He adds, "any music video you've seen, any front row girls are light skinned." When I quizzed why, he responds:

> I have no idea it's just a trend I am following. I don't know the philosophy behind. I have no prejudice against dark skin girls or whatever but it is a stereotype and unfortunately that is what the audience have grown accustomed to and are expecting. So deviating from it based on your personal whatever reasons is going to cost you with the mileage of that video cos people are not going to latch onto it as much as they would if your lead female was more of an Yvonne nelson than a Lydia Forson kind of thing.

Here he offers an explanation largely based on business considerations. In other words, what will make my video attract more viewers? For him, the selection of light skinned women will match the expectations of the audience. Often, the type, number and performances of women in the videos appear to be conceptualized for the heterosexual Ghanaian male gaze. For instance, Guru's music video "Pooley" (2014) (pooley is his renaming of "ashawo" or "shashee which means "prostitute") features sexually charged portrayals of female performers in mini-skirts, mid-riff tops and lingerie. The male performers show the audience where to look; the collective gaze focused on the sexualized curves of the female performers.

In addition, the music video directors I interviewed also acknowledged that they tended to scrutinize the physical appearance of the women more than men. They explained that they considered characteristics such as a pretty face and nice skin. They considered nice skin free of blemishes easier to edit because blemished skin was simply extra work they would have to touch up. Some directors and musicians asserted that light skin simply looked better on camera and was easier to grade in post-production. When I asked a personal assistant (she sometimes works as a producer on set) of a prominent

director what was essential in the selection of women, she immediately responded "the color." For her, light skin women arrested attention thereby ensuring that the music video was not "dull." According to her, they look for "light skin girls, white girls, dark girls, not really that dark, but girls with swag…" The directors did contend that if you were exceptionally skilled it should not be a problem to light and edit darker skin tones. That notwithstanding, most of them noted that the selection of the character was primarily driven by the concept of the music video derived from the song. One director reminds me, most of the songs are about women as love interests.

There was a sense that light skin simply videoed better. On the discussion, one upcoming director observed:

> what I have come to realize is that when you are shooting a light skin person with camera they kind of seem to bright not just them but the whole picture ,...rather than the dark people. So me I have this theory that the camera was made for white people. At least that is what I think when they were making the first camera, they by all means test it.... I am not sure they tested it on a black person

Another director who had trained and worked on music videos in North America recalls how the techniques he had employed there for capturing skin tones and grading were not entirely applicable for shooting Ghanaians with dark skin. He notes, "…some of my grading techniques that I would use on white, I didn't realize how bad it was until I started using it on black people." He adds, "I stopped using it because like the way it works on black people does not look good. Took me a while to realize that, so the way you have to light for black people is quite different."

I would interview one director who proudly claimed that he is "team light skin" when it comes to casting women. He also argues:

> when the camera was made in china there was no black person available...they tested it on white people. All the presets all the programs they tested it on white people. So if you want to use on a black person you have to light extra or use faster. Light skin people are cool. They are photogenic.

He raises an important point to here. Almost half of the directors I interviewed were self-taught, learning from other directors and with videography tutorials on YouTube. It's interesting to note that in most cases, white people are usually the subjects in these tutorials. As a wedding photographer in Ghana, who also consumed a lot of tutorials from the US, I recall struggling to get the same effects I was studying when working with the dark-skinned people. The notion that the camera is adept at handling light skin tones is not unsurprising.

The early history of color photography reveals how the technology itself was developed with light-skin bias and produced unflattering images of non-white peoples. In fact, when Jean Luc Godard was asked to do some work in Mozambique he refused to use Kodak accusing it of being racist.[36] The "Shirley Card" which featured the image of a white woman in a high-contrast colorful dress was originally used as the standard for calibrating all skin tones. Adult male reference cards were not common, leading Roth (2009) to suggest that "Shirley card" further reflects popular Euro-American masculinist ideas of beauty. Roth (2009) argues, the inability to render non-white skin tones appropriately is rooted in how imaging technologies "were originally developed with a global assumption of "Whiteness" embedded within their architectures and expected ensemble of practices" (p.117). In "movie lighting," Dyer (1997) has also argued, "doing something special" to light black skin implies the notion of "departing from a white

[36] See "'Racism' of early colour photography explored in art exhibition." Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/25/racism-colour-photography-exhibition

norm" (p.98). For instance, he reveals that historically, the reason for "backlighting, in addition to keeping the performer clearly separate from the background, was that it ensured that blonde hair looked blonde" (p.92). Now backlighting is simply part of conventional movie lighting approaches.

A filmmaker, Aku Purpleheart, informs me about the casting calls she comes across, she states:

> Are you fair in complexion? Do you have nice body shape?...it's so demeaning you know. ...apply if only you think have all these qualities and you're beautiful… Ok, so what happens to the dark skin babes? What happens to our dark skin sisters who are still beautiful?...but at the end of the day even if you get picked koraa. They are not going to depict you in any nice way. You're just going to shake your ass.

Aku's question, "What happens to our dark skin sisters who are still beautiful?" brings to mind Taylor's (2016) ideas about black invisibility. He argues, "we can say that expressive objects and practices manifest whiteliness when they accept, rely on, follow from or advance white supremacist prejudices, and that anti-whitely objects and practices will resist or challenge these prejudices" (p. 48). One of the categories he identifies for understanding black visuality is "presence." Presence refers to how spaces and practices exclude black people and their cultural productions. Within this study, the bias towards light skin models either due to "technical" considerations or the light skin preferences of directors and artists operates in manner that excludes dark skinned women models from featuring in prominent positions in music videos.

As noted, the physical appearance of women plays a significant role in their ability to attain success. Broadly speaking, the more beautiful a woman is considered the better their chances when competing for resources such as employment, education and

even potential spouses (Hunter, 2013). In this way, skin tones of women can affect income, education, and marriageability. Women are valued primarily by how they look, thus physical attractiveness is such a critical aspect of a woman's value (Hunter, 2013). As a cultural construction, beauty is greatly informed by features of social ranking, primarily race (Hunter, 2013).

Studies on skin whitening have not paid much attention to the technologies of visual representation. Beyond the historical connections between racialized aesthetics and colonialism, the representation of these beauty ideals are also crucial to their persistent presence in popular culture. I argue that the very technologies that project these racialized aesthetics are deeply implicated, in their architecture, in constructing and representing Eurocentric beauty ideals across the world. As noted above, historically, these technologies and conventions have been shaped by the assumption of a white consumer and thus a white norm. Thus, it is unsurprising that some Ghanaian directors seem to intuitively sense that their cameras and techniques appear better at capturing white or light skin tones. Yet, it does not explain the fact that, overwhelmingly, the male artists seem to be darker than the models that surround them.

Currently, there seems to be some push towards depicting darker skinned and natural hair wearing female models. Indeed, some directors and artists push against the bias for light skin performers. As Fofo Gavua of Abstrackte stated, "chale me I legit even ignore some big artist sake of he want light skin woman for en video…" He turned down the opportunity to work with big name artists because they insisted on featuring light skin women in their music videos. Fofo told me he deliberately wanted to address the problem of light valorization and bias. He stated, "… so I have been putting effort to choose dark

skin…" Yet, even when a model or a dancer was selected there was another hurdle of how they will be eventually represented. In the next section, I deal with the matter of women's representation in hiplife.

Hiplife Music Videos and Representation of Women

The problematic representation of women is not unique to hiplife. In fact, the global history of the female visual representation is replete with images highlighting the appearance of women, particularly black women, as hypersexualized and commodified. Women in hiplife music are depicted as objects of men's desire whose appearance is used to highlight male success (Shipley, 2012). Conversely, there are also several songs that portray women as threats to male success. In these songs, young men are warned to stay away from these sexually promiscuous women who are only interested in their money. For instance, Sidney's 2002 hit song "Abuskeleke" critiques the female body and uses humor to warn men to avoid the distractions of young women (Shipley, 2012). As such, the song is also about women who dress provocatively and use their sexuality to garner social and economic capital. More recently, Sakordie's 2012 hit song, "U go Kill me", is about sexually promiscuous women he calls "azonto." Even though some of these songs stir moralistic controversy, the ones that contain lewd lyrics typically become popular in spite of, or because of this (J. Collins, 2005).

Rose (2008) has observed, in U.S. hiphop, that the prominent images of blackness "reflect the hallmarks of mainstream masculinity: They regularly use women as props that boost male egos, treat women's bodies as sexual objects, and divide women into groups that are worthy of protection and respect and those that are not" (p.111). Previous studies on gender and music videos have indicated that women are more likely to be

portrayed highlighting their appearance (Aubrey& Frisby, 2011; Conrad et al, 2009; Gow, 1996; Turner, 2011). Other content analytic studies have also indicated that women in music videos are typically depicted as sexual objects through sexually suggestive clothing that expose a lot of skin (Aubrey& Frisby, 2011; Conrad et al, 2009; Turner, 2011). Indeed, in a recent content analysis of music videos comparing sexual objectification across genres and artists, Aubrey & Frisby (2011) revealed that female artists were more likely to be objectified, their appearances were held to stringent standards and they were often depicted in sexualized performances.

Other studies examining race and gender in music videos have also revealed that black female characters were more likely to wear sexually provocative clothes (Turner, 2011; Frisby & Aubrey 2012). Some U.S. based studies have also shown that music videos associated with black genres usually have more sexual content than white genres (Jones, 1997; Turner, 2011). Turner (2011) argues that the degree of sexual content is not necessarily a characteristic of the genre, rather it is connected with the race of the artist (p.186). His study further highlights that black female supporting characters were more likely to be depicted in sexually provocative clothes than white characters. In a study of U.S. rap music videos, Conrad et al. (2009), revealed that black women were more likely to have so-called Eurocentric features than black men. Female characters were likely to have longer straighter hair, thinner noses and lighter skin tones.

Shipley's (2012) book, "Living the hiplife," contains a brief analysis of Mzbel's music video "16 years" (2005), a song about a sixteen-year-old-girl pursued by an older man. He observes that the display of "expensive accessories like mobile phones, sunglasses, and purses" illustrates the construction of a "modern girl as she comes to

sexual adulthood and moves across the urban landscape" (p.177). The settings, like a petrol station and basketball court, present "Accra as a modern space for carefree girls to navigate freely" (Shipley, 2012, p.177). The lyrics and video show that women can display their bodies in public without necessarily inviting sexual advances. It also broadly deals with older men preying on young underage women. The video focuses on a young girl, played by Mzbel, who is sexually harassed by an older man and her attempt to secure justice in the courts. Mzbel, like her male colleagues, draws on sexually provocative performances to attain fame. The song was nominated for "Hiplife Song of the year" in the 2006 edition of the Ghana Music Awards with Mzbel being the only female artist nominated in that category.

As Shipley (2012) points out, "Mzbel's fame called into question hiplife's focus on the objectification of female sexuality, raising questions about the potential and threat of female sexual and economic agency" (p.175). Though success in hiplife demands self-entrepreneurialism, symbolically it is undergirded by objectifying women's sexuality. As he writes, "[t]he free-speaking rapper entrepreneur is posited as a male-consuming individual. Entrepreneurship is masculinized, predicated on the consumption of female value, while at the same time threatened by it" (p.180). Meanwhile in U.S. hiphop, Rose (1994) suggests that "rap's symbolic male domination" over women is rooted in fact that "the fulfillment of male heterosexual desire is significantly checked by women's capacity for sexual rejection or manipulation of men" (p.192). An apparent distrust of women in the images and lyrics of hiphop music appears to express the "vulnerability of heterosexual male desire" and fear of female domination (Rose, 1994, p.192). Usefully, these observations allow us to understand why the jezebel image— women who use their

sexuality to procure favors from men— has also become a mainstay of hiplife music as a cautionary tale to men.

The above discussion of studies on gender and music videos point to the following issues: female characters and artists are depicted with an emphasis on their appearance and that black female characters are more likely to be portrayed in more sexually provocative clothes than their white counterparts. Furthermore, in U.S. rap black women are more likely to have Eurocentric characteristics than men. Studies on images of women in rap music have also revealed hypersexual depictions of black women (Hunter and Soto 2009, hooks 1992). Indeed, bell hooks (1992) notes that popular culture is replete with images of black female bodies as expendable. Their bodies have been appropriated and exploited through negative stereotypical portrayals.

It is against this background that the current study now turns to the examination of the jezebel image in hiplife music, a mainstay of this male dominant genre. The jezebel image remains one of the persistent representations of modern Ghanaian women in hiplife music videos. Thus, I am also concerned over what this controlling image can tell us about our current social-cultural and political economic moment on the march towards development.

The Jezebel

Leath (2013) provides a useful context to understand the historical nineteenth century Queen Jezebel. She writes that Jezebel can be placed within:

> …three (ostensibly) timeless power matrices: (1) the power matrix of faith: a faith of her own, the faith of her Hebrew narrators, and the faith of contemporary believers who hold the Hebrew scriptures sacred; (2) the power matrix of politics: politics defined by the objectives of nation/empire building through labor and

> alliances; and (3) the power matrix of sexuality: sexuality defined, primarily, as corrupted by the inferiority of women, the default conceptualization of all things sexual as immoral and cooptation as an instrument of seduction and manipulation; rarely, but significantly, also as a matter of self-protective agency (Leath, 2013, p.197).

Within Jezebel's biblical history, her original name was "Itha-Baal" which literally means "where is Baal?" (Phoenician god). However, Lomax (2018) suggests that "Jezebel" may be a slur and not her real name. The Phoenician word Baal could also be translated as "highness" or god. Thus, she could have been regarded as a woman of God. She also worshipped Asherah, Baal's partner, who was able to present herself as both female and male. Jezebel's followers "engaged in spiritualized, polyamorous sexual acts through which they embodied a connection with the earth's seasonal changes" (Leath, 2013, p.198). That notwithstanding, Leath (2013) has pointed out that "the central attack on Jezebel's sexuality, in fact, had nothing to do with her intimate praxes, but were actually a matter of her queer polytheistic and pluralistic faith praxes" (p.198). Jezebel was also politically pluralistic and even hosted an interfaith banquet. When she was attacked by monotheistic "prejudices of the leaders of the Israelite community [she then pursued] the destruction of Israel's most famous prophet during this period, Elijah" (Leath, 2013, p.198). As the wife of the Israelite King Ahab, she was also attacked by the monotheistic Israelite writers who thought she was influencing their King to abandon the worship of Yaweh.

Writing about Jezebel, Frost (1964) has also argued that because she was against Israel, biblical accounts of her were unfavorable. For instance, Jehu's levied accusations against her for "harlotries and sorceries" when he caused an uprising against her son (Frost, 1964 p.503). Further, Frost describes how other biblical female figures accused of

"seduction, treason and murder" are depicted as "virtuous and praiseworthy" when those acts are in the service of Israel, however they are censured when they are against Israel (Frost, 1964, p.505). To this end, Leath (2013) aptly concludes that "[t]he epistemological work done to degrade the historical biblical Jezebel is seconded in the work done to fuse that Jezebel and black womanhood" (p.199). Jezebel could not be manipulated or controlled thus ideological work was done to cast her as the deviant other. Subsequently, contemporary reading of the reductionist hegemonic image of jezebel seeks to restore the power of male dominance.

Drawing on the work of Wilda C. Gafney, Lomax (2018) notes that Jezebel wielded power and stayed faithful to her religion and deities. She was not Hebrew, but Sidonian. For Lomax (2018) the gruesome telling of her death in the bible signals (p.41) "the defeat of the woman who dares to claim autonomy over her own body, beliefs, desires, presentation, politics and legacy" (p.42). In this way, she is marked as a warning: "reminding women what happens when they stand outside of cultural scripts" (p.43).

The contemporary jezebel comes to be regarded as a "whore, slut, gold digger." P. Collins (2000) has noted that the function of this "controlling image" within America and Europe "was to relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women, thus providing a powerful rationale for the widespread sexual assaults by White men …" (cited in P. Collins, 2000, p.82). In other words, she was cast as unrapable because she was hypersexual. The jezebel's sexual appetites were insatiable; she could be imagined as a "freak," in turn rendering her sexual partners as equally stigmatized (p.83). In addition, her deviant sexuality could be linked to aspirations of materialist success (P. Collins, 2000, p.84) and she becomes a gold digger, participating in sexual relationships to gain

material benefits. The jezebel also becomes masculinized because her excessive sexual desire was regarded as similar to the perception of the sexually aggressive black man (p.83). Gilman (1985) has observed that by the eighteenth century the sexuality of black people (male and female) were regarded in Europe as "deviant" (p.209). He claims that later, black female sexuality came to represent "black sexuality in general" (Gilman, 1985 p.209) and she was described as having "primitive genetillia" with an animal like intense sexual appetite (Gilman, 1985, p.212).

However, we must bear in mind that female sexuality has generally been policed by men in an attempt to exercise power through domination (P. Collins, 2000, p.144). Importantly, P. Collins observes that in the United Sates, Black female sexuality and fertility was closely associated with capitalistic accumulation. For instance, white men not only raped enslaved black women for pleasure but also to sell their offspring. In this case, the systematic rape of black women was also used a "weapon of domination, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist, and in the process, to demoralize their men" (P. Collins, 2000, p.147). Further, P. Collins asserts that the exploitation of "Black women as breeders objectified them as less than human because only animals can be bred against their will" (P. Collins, 2000, p.135). To this end, Black female sexual autonomy was perceived to be a challenge to the interests of White men. Thus, the jezebel image attempts to efface intersecting oppressions by rendering the Black woman as sexually promiscuous, and consequently unable to inherit the social signifiers attributed to white femininity.

Within the Ghanaian context the jezebel is commonly depicted as an attractive "temptress" who uses her sexuality to procure favors, largely, from men. Conversely, she

is also presented as using her sexuality to threaten men into doing things for her. In an analysis of sexist language used by young Ghanaian male university students, Dako (2013) highlights how the "jezebel" label was invoked to describe a young woman who had accused a prominent politician of rape. Further, Dako shows the language used in the published letter presented the survivor as "sexually aberrant," "mentally disturbed," "witch," "liar," and a "flirt" (p.21). To be sure in Ghana, like many other places, the outward expression of female sexual desire is mostly frowned upon.

Another Ghanaian manifestation of the idea of the jezebel appeals more directly to her so-called aberrant sexuality. Commonly observed, the media are regarded as sites where this image is (re)produced and circulated. In Dankwa's (2009) study of female same-sex intimacies in Ghana, she observes how Ghanaian movies like "Supi: The Real Woman to Woman" (1996) "promise to show true stories and play on the audience's voyeuristic 'desire to see something that remains hidden and secret in society,' while marking 'lesbians' as a threat to both biological and social reproduction" (p.197). Similarly, the movie "Women in love" (1996), set in the Ga coastal area, portrays "wealthy women involved in Mami Wata (mermaid spirit) cults" (p.197). The lesbian women are portrayed as greed-driven who rob their female lovers of their fertility. According to Dankwa, the "derogatory" conceptions of Mami Wata harken back to "Akan stereotypes of the coastal Ga people as lacking discretion and being inclined to blunt and "shameless" [behaviors], including same-sex practices—allegedly due to their early exposure to European colonialists" (p.197). Further, she asserts that the portrayal of same-sex intimacy in the movie was not depicted as a foreign influence "but as a spirit

that possesses urban middle-class women who are obsessed with wealth, power, and modern consumerism" (p.197).

Following the popularity of "Women in love," the director Socrates Safo made a four-part movie called "Jezebel" modeled on a similar story and it was released in 2007-2008. The movie follows the story of a married woman, Nana Ekua whose rich friend, Susu, recruits her into a Mami Wata (mermaid spirit) cult. After joining the cult, Nana Ekua becomes wealthy as her husband is rendered impotent. The two women engage in intimate sexual acts. They obtain gifts from men while also rendering them impotent. Susu is portrayed as a homewrecker, a temptress who destroys marriages.[37] Visually, the two women are depicted smoking and dressed in revealing clothes and tattooed. These bodily markers appear to recall commonly held notions in Ghana that the quest for material pleasures can lead to moral decay.

With regards to the image of jezebel, what we really discern here is the notion of non-conformity, that is, these "jezebels" are women who do not model the traditional, patriarchal, feminine role. We must remember the authority to define social values is indeed an exercise of power (P. Collins, 2000, p.69). Thus, her non-conformity represents a threat to male dominance and the reproduction of patriarchy. To this end, my concern here is calling attention to pernicious deployment of the jezebel image that renders women as exploitative and untrustworthy. Undoubtedly, the jezebel images are deployed to secure ideological justification for the perpetuation of gender oppression (P. Collins

[37] It is perhaps useful to keep in mind that the biblical Jezebel, according to Frost (1964), succeeded in having a "husband-wife relationship" with Ahab which he claims was "almost unique in the Old Testament"(507).It was likely that Ahad had other wives, thus the husband-wife relationship was an "achievement" difficult to attain in due to the "circumstances in a royal harem"(507)

70). Two prominent themes run through the jezebel image, namely she is sexually deviant and has materialistic desires. Her depiction becomes a marker of what is considered unacceptable sexual behavior. Broadly speaking, she also seems to embody commonly held notions about the corrupting influence of Western culture on so-called traditional Ghanaian morals and values. At this point, I will examine a popular hiplife music video called "Vera" (2012) through an African feminist lens. I intend to unravel how the deployment of the jezebel image attempts to normalize the oppression of women in a patriarchal society by defining her non-conformity as deviant.

Vera

When D-Black's song featuring Joey B, "Vera" was released in 2012, it quickly became one of the popular songs contemporary in Ghana. It was nominated for the "Song of the Year" and "Hiplife song of the Year" at the 2013 edition of the Ghana music awards. The music video, which was released in August of 2012, also picked up the nomination for "Best Africa West" at the Channel O music video awards. In 2012 D-Black described "Vera" as the best video he had shot so far and stated that it was not just a music video but a movie. It was directed by Pascal Aka, a Canadian trained filmmaker. D-Black also known as Desmond Kwesi Blackmore, has been described as a Ghanaian rapper and entrepreneur. The song "Vera" is about a woman who is unfaithful to her boyfriend and dumps him after spending his money. It is sang in Pidgin English from the perspective of a man who has been jilted by a "cheating gold digging" partner. In the song D-Black laments about how Vera[38] slept with his friends, aborted a baby and spent his money. D-Black is regarded by some as a bad rapper, however, his good business

[38] Vera is a shorten form of the name Veronica which is also a biblical reference.

sense is well known. In line with his entrepreneurial practice, the "Vera" music video had a party launch, which was sponsored and supported by a number of well-known Ghanaian companies including YFM, Citi FM, E.TV and GhOne. Here, it is important to note that hiplife musicians strive to attain fame in order to convert it to economic capital, through, for instance, brand endorsements (see Chapter 2).

The video was shot on location at the director's family house in North Legon and also on the University of Ghana campus, Legon in Accra. A majority of the video was shot in two days but it took a total of three days to complete shooting. The video also features cameos of well-known people in the entertainment industry like the radio presenter/DJ Benny Blanco and comedian, Funny Face. Alongside the music video, D-Black also released a behind the scenes video that showed the making of the video and provided an explanation about its concept. Also it featured various cast members talking about their characters in the video.

Generally, the video has a comedic outlook and also attempts to mimic traditional filmic elements like the trailer green rating introduction screen that informs us that the preview has been approved for "all audiences." It also begins with opening credits, thus we are introduced to the various housemates who enter their new house. In order of appearance, they include: D-Black playing Desmond; Krynkman, the actual producer of the song, as Nixon the nerd; Jessica as Sarah; Joey B playing Darryl; Dein who plays herself and a sixth male housemate who is unnamed. The six housemates appear to be tertiary students; we can discern this based on the cast's appearance with backpacks on the University of Ghana campus and Nixon who always seems to be studying. In the video, we come to learn that Desmond and Vera have been dating for three months. We

know this because a time title credit shows us that after the first three months Desmond introduces Vera to his housemates as his new girlfriend, and then after another three months we see Vera packing her belongings and leaving the house. To this end, it was implied that she had moved in with Desmond. In the video a series of shots show Vera getting ready to leave, we see her packing her bags, wearing make-up and ignoring Desmond as he sings about her treachery. Desmond appears distraught and even as she leaves, he attempts to prevent her by standing in front the door blocking it, Vera promptly holds his shirt and using one hand lifts him of the ground (see Figure 4.8).

In terms of editing, "Vera" (2012) follows a typical music video approach where the quick cuts are made to match the song's beat and pattern. Even the special effects like the distortions of the images and the appearance of texts are all synced with the beats. Similarly, throughout the video the camera is constantly moving, attempting to "match and sustain the song's momentum" (Vernallis, 2004, p.35). Elements like the speech bubble and the bouncing ball that helps audiences sing along are used to give the video a ludic feel. The bouncing ball has been commonly used in children's videos and this element can also be understood as a potential vehicle by which the problematic conceptualizations of women portrayed are transferred to younger audiences.

The use of close-up shots to highlight the star and reveal "something intimate about a character" is typical in music videos (Vernallis 2004, p.33). Thus in "Vera", there are close-ups of Desmond sitting on the bathroom floor. His facial expression suggests that he has been crying and thus this may position spectators to sympathize with him. In fact, his eyes pop-out, and this seems to literally imply that he has been crying his eyes out. His isolation in the bathroom away from his friends may also point to

commonly held notions about "crying men" being weak. Real (1998) has argued that the acquisition of masculinity in most cases appears to be a disavowal of any trait considered feminine (p.130).

The close-ups are also used to underscore accompanying lyrics, for instance the shot of Vera with what appears to be a pregnancy test is in sync with lyric "You preg way you commot," meaning "you got pregnant and had an abortion." Here, it is pertinent to note that in that shot she is wearing an American flag themed tank top which may be also convey the idea of foreign corrupting influence. Indeed, as commonly observed, some Ghanaians not only see the United States as a land of wealth and opportunities but also a morally objectionable society. Additionally, we can even draw parallels to the biblical Jezebel around the theme of a corrupting foreign influence. In Frost's (1964) account of Jezebel, he notes that she came from a "cosmopolitan seaport" and might have thought it her mission to civilize the hill country people of King Ahab (p.507).

As noted, the video was touted as movie, however the narrative is largely implied as a series of single processes centered around the implied break-up between Vera and Desmond. The break-up shots feature Vera applying make-up, packing belongings and leaving Desmond's house, however, these shots are intercut with shots that illustrate some aspects of the lyrics. It appears the break-up process represents the present while the intercut shots are a reference to past events that may have led to the split.

To this end, from the song we are told that Vera is unfaithful, she apparently engages in sexual relationships with Desmond's friends. In one shot, Desmond attempts calling her, upon seeing his name on her phone she promptly ignores the call, all the while she is in bed with Desmond's housemate, Nixon the nerd. In the song Desmond

recounts how he has spent money to pay her school fees, buy her gifts and even sent money to her mother in Takoradi (the capital of Western region in Ghana) when her father passed. A shot in the video shows Desmond handing her a box and we can clearly see the word Gucci on the side. She appears ecstatic and leans over to give him a peck.

Two prominent themes about Vera are highlighted in the music video— she is shown as promiscuous and materialistic. For instance, in a verse Desmond says:

> Oh Vera!
> What happened to the Louie
> You find another lover wey e buy you better shada
> Wey you feel say I no see

In this short excerpt he makes reference to a Louis Vuitton designer label item he probably gave her but now it appears as if she has found another lover who probably buys her better clothes. He continues to inform her that he knows what is going on.

In the music video the reference implying that Vera aborted pregnancy may be regarded as the practice of a sexually autonomous woman who makes choices about her reproductive health. Thus, Desmond's inability to control her can also be a likely reading of this situation. Moreover, having an abortion in a country like Ghana dominated by Christianity is a highly contentious issue. Indeed, this type of reference to female sexual reproduction is not new. Similar themes are invoked in the popular song, "Yawa Girl," released in 2008 by the group R2Bees (Refuse to be Broke). The title "Yawa Girl" means fake or cheap girl. In the song, Mugeez, a group member, raps "I dey want hear say baby dey cry you still dey use the Secure" which means "I want to hear the sound of baby but you are still using Secure" (Secure is a birth control pill). Here the idea of woman

controlling her reproductive health is challenged in "Yawa Girl," when she uses contraception and in the song "Vera" (2012) when she gets an abortion.

The masculine desire to control female sexuality is central to the depiction of the jezebel image. According to McFadden (2003) there "is an extremely intimate relationship between sexuality and power, a connection which is manifested in a range of circumstances and experiences." She points out that through systematic cultural surveillance African women's sexuality is suppressed and conflated with reproduction "within a hetero-normative cultural and social matrix." Thus, power is exerted in order to reaffirm male dominance over female sexuality and the non-conforming jezebel who signifies sexual liberation represents a threat to stereotypical image of the submissive, pious woman. Hungwe (2006) shows, that for sex workers, so far as their activities "remained under patriarchal control or furthered male interests" they were accorded some legitimacy" (p.41). For instance, in the Kenyan Mau Mau rebellion, male leaders accorded sex workers some legitimacy when they used them to trap African policemen. In this way, Hungwe (2006) argues, these "women were therefore allowed some specious freedoms during the revolt without risking social ostracism, as long as their transgressive behavior remained under patriarchal control or furthered male interests" (p.41).

Vera is not only portrayed as sexually deviant but as possessing superhuman strength. She is depicted as strong as such she can defend herself as Desmond attempts to prevent her from leaving. Further, she is even depicted as a man eater literally devouring the head of Desmond. A shot shows her getting a plate of food from a fridge with an animated head of Desmond hovering over the plate (see Figure 4.6).

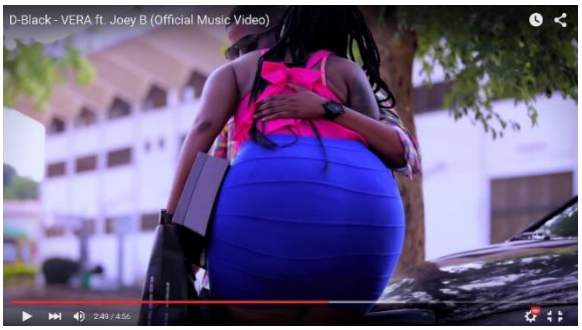

Figure 4.3: Shot showing the pop out effect to Vera's derrière

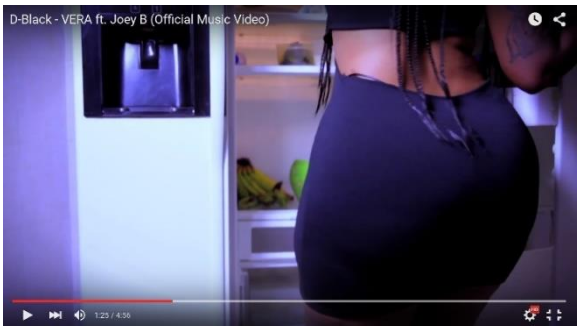

Figure 4.4: Another shot that emphasizes Vera's derrière

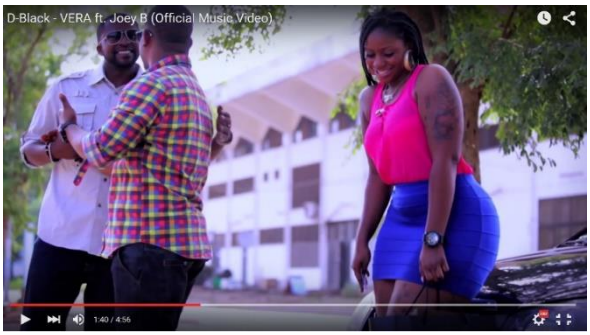

Figure 4.5: From the left, Benny Blanco, D-Black and Vera

Figure 4.6: Vera eating a meal with D-Blacks head

Figure 4.7: Vera lifting D-Black off the ground as he attempts to prevent her from leaving

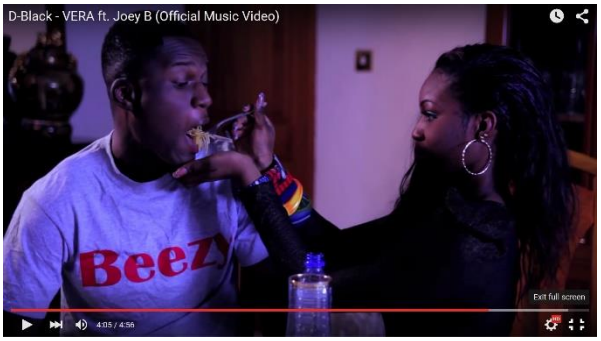

Figure 4.8: Joey B being fed by his girlfriend, Sarah

Vera is played by Matilda Quaye who is described as a "curvy video vixen" by some entertainment websites. In the video, she is shown wearing tight clothes that appear to emphasis her large bosom and derrière. In fact, there are multiple moments in the video where a special effect is used to enlarge her derrière. Another shot highlighting her

body is a panning medium shot of her from the neck down to the knees as she walks across the screen. These shots call attention to the size and significance of her body parts associated with sexuality. To be sure, due to the objectification of her body she is rendered as other which becomes a way to manipulate and control her (P. Collins, 2000, p.70). Further, drawing on bell hooks, she notes that as subjects people have agency to define their reality but as objects their reality is defined for them. Thus, one might contend that due the dominance of men in hiplife the jezebel images of women are an effort to reassert control. It is also important to note that Vera has tattoos because tattoos are relatively uncommon in Ghana as people tend to associate them with the notion of "bad." They are regarded by the largely Christianized population as an immoral influence. That notwithstanding, misconceptions about people with tattoos may be changing in recent times as tattoo parlors spring up in the capital city, Accra.

Vera is contrasted with Sarah,[39] another prominent female character in the video, who is the girlfriend of Darryl (Joey B), the featured artist. In the video Darryl, one of Desmond's housemates, appears to console him while also reminding him about Vera's numerous sexual relationships. In the song, he raps: Chale E.L chop, Reggie sef talk, who again sef, errm Deeba! /So you alone world cup, wow well done/Girl wei, she be loose pass turbine. In this excerpt, he tells D-Black that both E.L and Deeba have slept with Vera. As such, she is not the type woman to start a serious relationship with because of her large sexual appetite and history of promiscuity. He goes on to then ridicule Desmond and question why he took the relationship seriously. He then proceeds to contrast Vera with his girlfriend Sarah, who he claims to adore. Subsequently, a series of shots attempt

[39] The biblical Sarah was the wife and half-sister of Abraham.

to provide explanation. For instance, a shot appears to show Sarah serving Darryl food, then continuing to even literally feed him and give him water by lifting the glass to his lips (see Figure 4.8). Another shot shows her giving him money, as they embrace he looks into the camera to give us a thumbs up. The shots that follow appear to show them reading the bible and then praying together. Darryl raps that he has a "good woman," he says: "Memp3 me ho asem nti me dor me Sarah," meaning because I don't want trouble I love my Sarah. These series of shots seek to paint a picture that Sarah is a good woman and potentially marriage material. What is implied here is that she can cook, is religious and also has money she is willing to give to Darryl. The script is flipped because she is depicted as the economically independent. Physically, Sarah appears darker and slimmer than Vera and she does not appear to have any visible tattoos. To this end, the depiction of Sarah serves as a foil to Vera's portrayal not only in performance but in physical appearance.

Towards the end of the video, we are shown shots of Desmond and his friends sitting on a wall. Vera appears and she is meeting with a man who almost ran over Desmond with his black car earlier in the video. As Desmond's friends alert him to what is happening, he cannot believe his eyes as he looks on with astonishment. Meanwhile Vera and this new man, who incidentally Desmond knows, embrace and she proceeds to sit in his car. The new man, played by Benny Blanco then looks to Desmond and gives him a wave, as if to acknowledge that he successful snatched his "woman." This is followed by a shot of Desmond walking and sulking, while little children point to him and laugh. Meanwhile in the car, there is Sarah (Darryl's girlfriend) with another man in the back seat, they hi-five while laughing. We are reminded it is Sarah because we are

shown an earlier shot of her and Darryl. The man in the back seat with Sarah is Funny Face, he proceeds to give her a peck as they embrace, he in turn clandestinely gives Vera his number behind Sarah's back. In the end, Funny Face offers advice in Twi which is translated to mean, "Next time when you have money, then you go and spend it on a woman." This twist in the ending appears to be a warning to all men that all women are not to be trusted. Similarly, Dako (2013) points out that Sutherland-Addy has aptly observed that the commonly observed Ghanaian maxim repeated in popular culture, "Fear woman!" can be seen plastered on shops and buses. According to her the fragment is derived from the axiom "Fear woman and live long."

From the above examination of the music video, there are a few points that require further exploration, namely the depiction of the Vera and Sarah's contrasting portrayal. First, I examine the physical appearance of Vera which I argue is germane to understanding elements of the jezebel image within the Ghanaian context. Secondly, I trace how structures of oppression are effaced when these images are deployed. Lastly, I will show how the images are indeed a reflection of the anxieties Ghanaian men have about the changing socio-economic, political and cultural terrain.

As noted earlier, she is depicted in revealing clothes—short dresses and skirts—but of particular salience is her light skin. As noted above, in postcolonial Ghana, so-called Eurocentric features— light skin and long straight hair— have been associated with beauty. Vera's depiction in the video, firstly, speaks to the quintessential valorization of light skinned Ghanaian women as beautiful. Thus, in the video she leverages her beauty to attract men in order to attain material benefits. For instance, D-Black— who is depicted as an upper-class tertiary student living in a house with a

swimming pool— is able to buy her designer label items such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci. Indeed, he is capable of paying her school fees and even sending her mother money after she lost her father. By implication, she is depicted as a university student having to rely on men to survive. In fact, D-Black even raps about how she slept with a teacher.

With regards to references about her sexuality, transactional sexual exchanges are not uncommon in Ghana. It is an open secret that some older Ghanaian men (sometimes married) pay for accommodation, education and even buy cars for younger women. Yet, most often it is the young women who are castigated for being "morally loose" and leading married men astray. Moesha Boduong, a Ghanaian socialite disclosed to Christine Amanpour (on her series 'Sex & Love Around the World') that she was in relationship with a married man who also pays for her apartment. She asserted that due economic hardships and steep two-year rent advance, as a woman "you need someone to take care of you." Public sentiments came in quick and harsh, she was admonished for sleeping with a married man and misrepresenting Ghanaian women. Some Ghanaian women responded by claiming that they had attained success without relying on their sexuality. Even the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection released a public statement condemning Moesha's remarks.[40] However, a number of people were frankly surprised by the outrage because this was a common situation.

However, these narrow but common depictions of women using their beauty to exploit men inherently obscures the real power relations in patriarchal postcolonial

[40] See "Gender Minister cautions 'publicity-hungry' celebs; condemns Moesha Boduong." Retrieved from https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2018/april-14th/gender-minister-cautions-publicity-hungry-celebs-condemns-moesha-boduong.php

Ghana. Here, it is apt to call attention to the fact that the music video industry, just like the hiplife music industry is male dominated. As such a majority of hiplife songs are indeed about men's experiences as postcolonial subjects within a precarious socio-economic moment (see chapter 2). More importantly, they are ideas about modern gender relations in postcolonial Ghana.

While the song obscures the social conditions that limit opportunities for Ghanaian women, it also performs the ideological work that justifies male supremacy and the subordination of women. As noted above, colonialism strengthened indigenous notions of male superiority and introduced novel ones. In this way, the patriarchal colonial state afforded men substantive advantages. For instance, missionary education was mandatory for men while optional for women. Women were taught to be domesticated housewives in nuclear family structures.

Another expression of sexist ideas is men's violence against women in Ghana. In Amoakohene's (2004) study, sixty-four percent of the Ghanaian women they interviewed had suffered some form of physically abuse and the women did not regard sexual assault in their marriages as a form of abuse (p.2377). For them, their duty was to be sexually available for their husbands. Indeed, until the passing of the Domestic Violence Act, 2007, marital rape was not considered a criminal offence in Ghana. According to Cantalupo et al. (2006) traditional beliefs, economic dependence on men and customary practices facilitate domestic violence by men against women (p.539). Drawing on the CEDAW report from 1991 - 2005 they note that all ethnic groups in Ghana consider "women to [be] inferior to men" (Cantalupo et al. 2006, p.540), thus men have the right to discipline women. So-called disobedient women are perceived to be failing at

performing the traditional female role (Cantalupo et al. 2006, p.541). This can occur when they are viewed as becoming too economically independent and thus "threatening the husband's superiority" (p.541). Ironically, she can also be abused even when her independence is really an attempt to supplement her husband's income. Abuse can also be provoked when she performs the traditional gender role like "asking for money" or the host of other feminine stereotypes (nagging) (p.541). As a result, Cantalupo et al. (2006) claim that women may not want to talk about their abuse publicly because of the fear of being perceived as failures. Further, when these perceptions manifest at the level of the police or judge they are ever more dangerous. For instance, the belief that a woman's abuse was provoked by her can lead to further revictimization and further injustice at the level of state institutions (p.543). In Adomako and Okyerefo (2014) examination of the writings of prominent "men of God," pastors, reveals how they uphold ideas that promote the subordination of women. For instance, Agyin-Asare's views on husband infidelity and abuse. He appears to

> advocate tolerance, advising women in such situations to recognize that 'you are not the first woman to be beaten by your husband, and you will not be the last … Rise up with the Word of God and use your spiritual weapons … keep going to church, listen to tapes, pray, notice the blessings around you, keep your vows'.(cited in Adomako & Okyerefo 2014, p.174)

Stereotypical normalized gender roles that dictate that women are supposed to be submissive and under the control of men enable the perpetuation of violence. Infidelity has also been used as a basis for abuse, therefore violence can be provoked when the husband suspects the wife of infidelity or when the wife objects to husband's infidelity (Cantalupo et al. 2006).

Male violence against women as mechanism of control can also be understood as a reflection of wider societal anxieties about the transforming socio-cultural and economic landscape. The fears and anxieties of the society are displaced on the female body, what McFadden (2003) calls the "socio-sexual anxiety." Indeed, a common perception in Ghana is that highly educated and successful women are disrespectful, and hence unmarriageable. More women are competing with men for positions on the job market and in the schools, thus the deployment of the jezebel image may be a reflection male anxieties.[41]

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to recount some experiences from the creative spaces engaged. I recall being on a film set and talking to some recent high school graduates. Three of them went to the same high school I did. Out of the group, two happened to be rappers and played me a song they had recorded. It was heavy with sexist language against women; they dropped the words 'hoes' and 'niggas.' They told me they only listened to foreign hiphop. After listening to the song, I had a lengthy conversation with these young men about gender and the sexist double standard against women when it comes to sex. Minutes after our conversation, one of these young men would harass a young woman who had ignored his advances. Throughout my time in the creative communities, I would engage men particularly, in conversations on gender. I would press them to think more critically about their gender politics, fueled in part by the public discussions ignited by Pepper Dems. For me, these conversations around gender

[41] Recall, the neoliberal interventions of the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programs further exacerbated unemployment and underemployment (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). Many lost their jobs in the public sector and the private sector did not absorb them as promised by the austerity program from the IMF. For many young people the new employment opportunities were mostly low wage jobs.

reminded me of the work ahead in the quest to produce more liberating performances of gender in Ghana.

From the examination above, I have suggested that colonial gender ideas imposed on the society persist and influence current understanding of Ghanaian femininity. Conservative notions that can partly be traced to Abrahamic religions, continue to shape ideas around morality and womanhood. Currently, as well as historically, these ideas have impacted the active participation of women in popular entertainment. Women's participation as rappers in hiplife remains low, and I have argued that this is partly due to the general impression that rapping is a man's sport. Women who rap are treated as the exceptions 'who can do what a man can do.' For these emcees, sexual politics continues to be an area of contention. While some women who rap draw on their sexuality for performances, others who do not speak about the direct and indirect industry pressures to draw more on the sexuality to attain some measure of success.

Other women cultural producers in the industry also face similar hurdles. Some dancers argue that they are treated like props, whose principle contribution is just to shake their derrière and that they are not really involved in the conceptual level of the production process. This reflects the formulaic "booty video" approach. It further supports the notion that the representation of sexual pleasure is dominated by heterosexual male desires and fantasies. Particularly, since a lot of the time the creative decisions seem to be in the hands of men – from the artists to the directors.

The analysis of race and gender reveals that light skin valorization within the industry, specifically with regards to women models and dancers, is shaped by business decisions, technical considerations and local racialized beauty aesthetics that attach value

to whiteness. Notwithstanding, I have argued that the bias for light skin tones, even though it appears to be changing, can prevent dark skin women from featuring prominently as leads in music videos. The overrepresentation of light skin models reinforces racialized beauty ideals that further encourages harmful practices, such as skin bleaching. In fact, as I write this conclusion U.S. celebrity, Blac Chyna has partnered with Whitenicous, founded by the Cameroonian pop star Denecia, to sell its skin lightening cream in Nigeria.[42] According to a World Health Organization report, 77% of Nigerian women skin bleach, the highest percentage in the world.[43] Skin bleaching disproportionately affects more women since perceived beauty is an important resource that can determine opportunities for education, employment and marriageability.

I have also argued that the visual technology and the practices, have historically privileged white and light skin tones. As such, some directors seemed to infer that these technologies already assume whiteness as the norm. Developing this understanding, enables productive examination of how the technologies and conventions themselves reinforce and perpetuate light skin bias.

Lastly, I have argued that the jezebel image that has become one of the mainstays of hiplife music that naturalizes the intersecting structures of oppression against Ghanaian women. To this end, I argue that hiplife music and its videos deploy the jezebel image as a foil to the image of "good" woman (pious, submissive etc.), in the traditional Ghana sense. Thus, hiplife, this male dominated industry, obscures the various layers of

[42] See "Blac Chyna called out for skin-lightening cream." Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-46288464
[43] See "Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments." Retrieved from https://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/mercury_flyer.pdf

oppression and ideologically justifies the continued oppression of women in Ghana. Indeed, it is an extension of the gospel of male superiority that is reinforced at almost every heterosexual church wedding where pastors, often men, ask the bride to submit to their husbands. In the music video, "Vera" (2012) we are positioned to sympathize with and embody the male characters. At once male privilege is effaced and women's oppression is reconfigured as a threat to male success. To be sure, in the subtext of the music video lies the untold stories of the socio-cultural and economic barriers that inhibit female upward mobility.

Women's active participation necessarily contributes to producing hiplife as ground for decolonial aesthesis (chapter 5). The male centered worlds constructed within hiplife and its music videos are unsettled by the presence of women's lived experiences. As such, hiplife itself needs to undergo a process of decoloniality in order to be appropriated towards a project of decolonial healing. Hiplife must address its problematic gender and sexual politics. This implies that the call for decolonial healing, the valuing of black life, must attend to how various mechanisms of oppression impact black people differently. Indeed, the objective is to value all black lives regardless of gender, sexuality, class etc. so that we can imagine and construct a world in which everybody can live their fullest possible lives.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS A DECOLONIAL AETHESIS: PRODUCING DECOLONIAL IDENTITIES

The value of black life

Colonial ideologies devalued black life and legitimated the violence of racial terror European colonialists deployed on black bodies. In turn, these ideologies were foundational to the colonial institutions (from education to policing) established in Africa. Yet, after independence, newly formed African nations maintained most of these institutions. Perhaps this might explain the seeming apathy towards needless deaths of black people in postcolonial Africa. There are just too many avoidable deaths to simply argue that they are the result of government neglect. Rather, I believe the net effect of maintaining these colonial institutions post-independence is the continuous devaluation of black life. For instance, why would an educational system look on as children study in dangerous dilapidated school buildings? Remember the six children crushed to death in a poorly maintained classroom building in Breman Asikuma. Gladys Ampofo, a three year old, was the youngest of the six. One preventable death should be too much to accept but our ability to tolerate numerous deaths reveals something: we didn't really dismantle the institutions that were never meant to affirm and value black life. Perhaps, it is time to reexamine and construct new institutions interested in ensuring that black lives thrive in this postcolonial space. Indeed, a state should ensure that its citizens are thriving and not merely surviving.

- Facebook post September 26, 2017

Introduction

I recall posting this on Facebook as an attempt to theorize what Fortunate Machingura[44] calls "allowable" deaths. I was reflecting on why needless and preventable deaths were such a commonplace in Ghana. From children left to attend school in a dilapidated building to the recent accidental death of the pop artist, Ebony Reigns. She, and two other people, died as their car attempted to swerve an abandoned heap of sand left during road construction. Ebony was heavily critiqued for her music and stage performances that were deemed sexually charged. In fact, due to this some Christian

[44] See "Allowable death and the valuation of Human Life: Do all lives matter? The study of people living with HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe." Retrieved from https://www.gdi.manchester.ac.uk/research/themes/growth-inequality-and-poverty/allowable-death-and-the-valuation-of-human-life/

preachers had even predicted her death which has become another mechanism for ignoring the problem of allowable deaths.

The question of allowable deaths would be the focus of my talk on December 14, 2017 during the Sabolai Radio music festival organized by Accra[dot]Alt at Brazil house in Jamestown, Accra. I sought to examine how arts and culture in Ghana could become the space to engender decolonialized identities. I felt that the production of decolonial identities would essentially mean a revaluing of black life in Ghana. I reckoned that in order to struggle for oneself one must value one's life. I believed that a decolonial identity would necessarily entail the affirming of black lives and their inherent value.

Yet, "[v]aluing black life" Gordon (2018) reminds us "is no small matter" (p.20). We must recall that in order to deploy acts of barbarism, the colonizer first invented the mindless savage, devoid of reason and history—what Césaire (2000) calls the "thingification" of the colonized. Today, Mignolo points out, "coloniality describes the hidden process of erasure, devaluation, and disavowing of certain human beings, ways of thinking, ways of living, and of doing in the world" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, p.198). Coloniality of being underscores the "lived experience of colonization and its impact on language" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, p.242). Indeed, Sylvia Wynter has argued that our current understanding of human is an overrepresentation of an ethnoclass, the Western white bourgeois man. Wynter observes that Eurocentric myths have positioned one genre of human as universal and emblematic all others (McKittrick, 2014). Due to these colonial wounds, decolonial identities will thus liberate and ascribe value to the lives of the colonized.

For Franz Fanon (2007), the "thing colonized becomes a [person] through the process of liberation" (p.2). Indeed, in Brazil house the question of liberation or what Sionne Neely (co-director of Accra[dot]alt) calls freedom-making remained central to what I call a decolonial praxis of reclaiming space (physically, emotionally, psychically etc.). For instance, I participated in two talk parties[45] that specifically generated thoughtful discussions around questions of liberation: one with Ria Boss on her album, "Finding your free," and the other with Alex Wondergem and Eli on their EP, "Buying Our Freedom."[46] As such, this space became a place where artists, fans, researchers, community members and other cultural producers mounted challenges against the social order and modeled alternatives ways of being.

First, they do this away from the direct surveillance of Ghanaian respectability politics and then later, these ways of being are made visible on the streets of Jamestown during the massive Chale Wote Street Art festival. These performances would also be immortalized in videos and photographs that would be circulated widely online. Brazil house, the location were former enslaved Afro-Brazilians settled in Accra, also came to represent a space where folks interested in engendering a consciousness about the brutal impact of colonialism on social, political and economic aspects of colonized lived experience. And more importantly, how it specifically devalued black life and all its attendant cultural practices.

At Brazil House, I saw hiplife artists like Akan perform for the first time and later I would see him on other stages and formally interview him. I believe hiplife is a place

[45] The talk parties consist of a lecture or talk followed by a music and dancing.
[46] See "Sabolai Radio Sets: Ria Boss, Building Space and the Divine Feminine." Retrieved from http://accradotaltradio.com/2017/07/sabolai-sets-ria-boss-building-space-divine-feminine

where a new language can take root. It is precisely because it remains a site for the relative freedom of expression, and this makes it fertile to produce a decolonial vocabulary. This is a language that can unmask the underside of the project of modernity which extracts cheap resources and labor from countries like Ghana. We cannot rely on old words, and by extension old ideas, to construct new subjects for a new society. We require a new language. We must recall, Wynter has argued, that the human is homo narrans, implying we are not only a languaging species but we are also storytelling beings (an idea she draws from Césaire).[47]

In this chapter, I study the production of decolonial identities by examining the lives and work of three artists: Akan, Wanlov the Kubolor, and Ayat. I am interested in how these cultural producers engage with decolonial aetheSis, which is any activity aimed at undoing the colonial sensibilities imposed on the colonized. I explore how their meaning-making activities contribute to cultivating new identities. Like Brent Hayes (2016), I am interested in how music becomes a vehicle for "imagining alternative futures—that is, an 'outside' or 'after' colonialism—through the performance" (p.277). To address these concerns, I will draw on formal interviews; participant observations at concerts, listening parties and music video shoots; recorded images and videos; and media interviews. Three main things, to me, demonstrate the way these artists consciously claim their Ghanaianess—and hence blackness— and how it impacts their

[47] Wynter also draws on the concept of autopoiesis (autonomously functioning living systems) from the work of Humberto Maturana. This concept describes the "interconnectedness of seeing the world and knowing the world-- he shows that what is seen in the world does not represent the world outside the living organism, rather it is the living organism that fabricates an image of the world through the internal/neurological processing of information" (Mignolo 2014, p.107). Thus, "he made the connection between the ways in which human beings construct their world and their criteria of truth and objectivity and notice how their/our nervous system processes and responds to information" (p.107).

music making in general. First, they adopt new performance names; second, they use their own language and accents; and lastly, they reconfigure their presentation of self. These three elements signal a moment of transition that becomes embodied in their performance personae. As it were, they become new beings reflecting a shift in their consciousness about themselves and their society. Below, I briefly explore decolonial aestheSis inherent in Ghanaian popular culture that form the possible ground to produce decolonial identities and practices.

Popular Culture and Decolonial Identities

One of the major threads throughout this project is how development discourse has become a colonizing discourse. It has replaced the salvationist promises of the European civilizing missions during age of colonialism. I draw on the concept of developmentality –derived from the Foucauldian notion of governmentality— to understand how everyday life is governed by discourses of development (Lie 2015; Ove 2013). Within this conception, Ove asks that power be understood to work through people's freedoms, and as such not to be regarded as repressive. This is because, he notes, in Foucault's formulation "power represents the ability of individuals to choose and to act on those choices" (Ove 2013, p.313). Thus, Ove (2013) points out, "power delimits action not by force—Foucault calls this domination—but by constraining the free choices of individuals through discursive processes of demarcating legitimate choices from illegitimate ones" (p.313). His approach offers us an opening to thinking about how development regarded as improvement operates through people's freedoms instead of being seen as an act of self-management. As Briggs (2002) has pointed out, "development operates through the mobilization of interests and aspirations of Third

World subjects and nation-states, in contrast to the deductive modality of colonial power" (p.424). In this way, development discourse becomes a terrain of possibilities limited by 'western' civilization's notion of progress and improvement (Sachs 2010). I argue that in Ghana the realm of imagination is also constrained because ideas of improvement often fail to transcend these accepted limits of development discourse. To this end, it has become difficult to imagine another world beyond the so-called established pacesetters—the West. Assad (1992) argues that, "social and cultural variety everywhere increasingly responds to, and is managed by, categories brought into play by modern forces" (p.333) — North Atlantic universals. For instance, Wynter (2003) claims that the overrepresentation of European man as Human is the struggle of our time (p.262), and that, economics is but a "proximate function" in the sense that it is implicated in maintaining the reproduction of this ethnoclass (p.317).

The realm of creative expression is a space to challenge this modern reproduction of colonial thinking and doing. Yet, Gordon (2018) notes that one of the problems of producing "black aesthetics is whether aesthetics has been so colonized that its production would be a form of colonizing instead of decolonial practice" (p.19). Hence, the notion of decolonial aesthesis, Mignolo argues is "any and every thinking and doing that is geared toward undoing a particular kind of aesthesis, of senses, that is the sensibility of the colonized subject" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2014, p.201). This framework is contrasted with the notion of aestheTics as a philosophy that emerges in eighteenth-century Europe to regulate taste within and outside Europe (Vasquez & Mignolo, 2013). Indeed, aesthetics is implicated in the new model of colonial power because the modern/colonial project also governed the "the senses and perception."

In their edited book "Audibility of Empire," Radano and Olaniyan (2016) argue that one can understand sound production "[a]s a colonizing force" deployed by empire to impose other ways of "discipline and order" (p.2). The "audibility of dominance" as a colonial project is explored through their notion of "audible empire" (p.6). Audible empire reveals how what one "hears and listens to" is shaped by the various structures of imperialism, including the epistemic and ontological regimes (p.7). The hearing of empire alone "draws the listener (and even the hearer) into a vast network of language, supra-linguistic sensory fields, regimes of knowledge, and new modes of subjectivity" (p.13). In this way, sound production is a colonizing force ordering social life. Drawing on Mark M. Smith's work, for example, they note that British colonialists "expanded the regulating power of outdoor sound devices, employing them to structure work among aboriginal people and to introduce temporal orders according to newly industrial impositions" (p.3). Agawu (2016) also argues that introduction of Protestant Hymns in Africa and its attendant European tonal thinking, enacted "musical violence." For him, native populations were not only made to speak a "tonal language" that was unsympathetic to "indigenous tone languages" (336-337) but that hymn-based tonality limited Africans to a "diatonic tonality" (p.338).

Yet, as Radano and Olaniyan (2016) point out, while music making became a means in which discipline and order were enforced it also formed the grounds on which resistance was deployed (p.9). Thus, a decolonial aesthesis of sound production aims to "decolonize the ear and the dancing body" to produce new decolonial identities (Denning 2016, p.30). Historically, Denning (2016) argues "this decolonization of the ear preceded and made possible the subsequent decolonization of legislatures and literatures, schools

and armies. The global soundscape was decolonized by the guerrilla insurgency of these new musics before the global statescape was reshaped" (p.30). For him, the emergence of gramophone musics from the colonized world such as hula, rumba, beguine, tango, jazz, samba, marabi, kroncong, taraab, and chaabi not only contributed to the cultural process of decolonization but was itself a "somatic decolonization: Decolonial projects move the colonized towards the healing of colonial wounds. To this end, decolonial artists are primarily interested in creating art, Mignolo argues, "to decolonize sensibilities, to transform colonial aestheTics into decolonial aesthesis" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, p. 201). To be sure, coloniality engendered a sensibility that constructed non-Europeans as 'deficient' humans; decolonial aestheSis seeks to dismantle this sensibility.

In this way, decolonial aestheSis is involved in what Gibson-Graham (2006), drawing on William Connolly (1996), call a politics of becoming— opening the possibility for the creation of new subjects. Decolonial aestheSis is precisely interested in recognizing and opening options for "liberating the senses,"[48] that is, making visible possibilities for decolonizing senses. Indeed, Mignolo asserts, in the world making for decolonial artists 'success' is largely defined by the contributions "to build decolonial sensibilities, decolonial subjects or, still, help colonial subjects to re-emerge, re-surge, and re-exist" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, p.205).

In considering music and identity, Frith (1996) notes that it is not necessarily a matter of whether the music or performance "reflects the people, but how it produces them" (p.109). Like Stuart Hall, Frith's follows the notion that identity is not an

[48] See "Decolonial Aesthetics (I)." Retrieved from https://transnationaldecolonialinstitute.wordpress.com/decolonial-aesthetics

"accomplished fact" but is always a process of becoming, and experiences of music, whether making or consuming, can be considered as "an experience of this self-in-process" (Frith, 1996, p.109). He notes that it is not that social groups come to agree on certain values and beliefs which are in turn expressed in cultural activities, rather "they only get to know themselves as groups…through cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement" (p.111).

Crucially, Frith (1996) sees identity as a process which can be "grasped as music." By this he means that music appears central to identity for it provides, "so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective" (p.110). Indeed, through sound production we can locate ourselves through our relationships with others (p.118). In this degree, music making and its consumption not only position us in the world but impact our sense of world making (p.114). He is concerned not with what music shows us about the people who make and consume it but rather the ways in which it constructs "them as a people, as a web of identities" (p.121). It "symbolizes and offers the immediate experience of collective identity" (p.122). More importantly for Firth, music is significant to identity because "it defines a space without boundaries (a game without frontiers)" (p.125). Sound is already involved in the process of transcending borders – across walls or hedges— while also possessing the ability "to define places; in clubs, scenes, and raves, listening on headphones, radio and in the concert hall, we are only where the music takes us"(p.125). How do we use music to take us to a decolonial space?

Here, I want to turn specifically to the ways in which music becomes the basis for engendering decolonialization. John Collins (2005) offers some insight into what he

describes as an “artistic ‘decolonizing’ countercurrent” during the adoption and adaptation of Westernized music making in Ghana (p.119). First, he notes, Ghanaian popular artists imitating imported Westernized forms deliberately, “artistically and intuitively” selected those forms that emanated from the black diaspora (p.120). Colonial importations of popular entertainment in the late nineteenth century already had elements of African diasporic popular culture which white people liked. They ranged from the minstrels, ragtime to the Afro-Cuban rumba and the calypso from Trinidad. J. Collins argues that the African performers— and what makes this decolonial in a sense—to some extent, transcended the norms of white performances and reclaimed those from the black diaspora displaced by the violence of Transatlantic slavery.

This high degree of syncretic adoption of black diasporic performances, J. Collins notes, is explained as “a matter of a ‘homologue’ as well as an ‘analogue’ effect” (p.123). The African performers chose the black elements within the Euro-American performance norms because instinctly they saw “something of their own in the new” which assisted them to incorporate these elements into their burgeoning “urban idioms” (p.123). Within hiphop in Africa, for example, Osumare (2013) draws on the notion of the “arc of mutual inspiration” which describes “circle of music and dance influences from Africa to its diaspora and back again” (p.188). In addition, J. Collins argues that black diasporans—missionaries, slaves, and soldiers— were brought to Africa by colonizers to assist in the colonization and Christianization of the continent. Paradoxically, they were catalysts in the development of decolonial popular performances (dance, music and drama) that resonated with local values and aspirations.

Second, the diffusion of coastal styles into the rural areas necessitated what J. Collins calls a "progressive indigenization"—which describes the double movement of popular forms "from traditional to modern and vice versa" (p.124-125). As commercial entertainment moved into the hinterlands, "popular artists had to adapt to the tastes, languages and artistic norms of their paying audiences by 'vernacularizing' their stage productions" (p.120). He notes that prevailing syncretic popular forms developed in the coastal ports and towns moved into the rural areas where they were indigenized to produce secondary and tertiary genres.

Lastly, during the independent era, in an ideologically self-conscious way, Ghanaian popular performers started indigenizing their performances. These performers were also influenced by the black consciousness ideas emanating from the black diaspora in the Americas. The music of the masses became part of the independence struggle since these movements were largely comprised of the "mass political parties" (p.127).

As such, highlife, for example, became a tool for the independence movement. Musicians and entertainers were outspoken about their support for Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) as they also consciously attempted to indigenize their performances to align with the "African Personality" and ideology of Pan-Africanism (J. Collins, 2005).The Axim Trio performed pro-Nkrumah concert party plays and in fact, one of the earliest uses of the name 'Ghana' was by the Burma Trio who renamed themselves the Ghana Trio in 1948. J. Collins (2005) notes this was the same year of the shootings at Christianborg and the boycotting of European shops lead by Chief Nii Kwabena Bonne II. By 1952, E.K. Nyame created the Akan Trio concert party as the first group to wholly incorporate highlife into the dramas and exclusively use

indigenous languages completing the "Africanization of this genre" (p.128). For E.K., this was an attempt to move away from the "colonial ideology and British mind" (cited in J. Collins 2005, p.128). In 1973, Nii Ashitey and Saka Acquaye a playwright would create the Wulomei Band. The group relied on the local instruments with exception of the guitar. Ashitey, J. Collins argues— drawing on Hobsbawn and Ranger— invented a 'Ga tradition' that spawned the creation of comparable cultural groups. Ashitey informed J. Collins that "he wanted the youth to forget foreign music and 'do their own thing': the title of one of James Brown's popular soul numbers" (p.130). Highlife is trans-ethnic, and as J. Collins notes Nkrumah sought to use it construct the notion of Ghanaianess, of Ghanaian identity. For J. Collins, "the African popular artist stands at the nexus of urban and rural, the old and new, black and white, local and imported, the commercial and artist, the elite and the masses-- which is why [he has] referred to them as the 'heroes of the cultural crossroads'" (p.132).

In terms of hiphop, Msia Kibona Clark and Mickie Mwanzia Koster (2014) observe that in Africa it has become a source of agency; a site of learning and resistance; and an avenue for "emotional release" which creates a "cathartic experience" for consumers and producers of the culture. Through hiphop, young rappers have also embraced marginalized identities and challenged their attendant stigmas. For instance, rappers from the West Coast of Madagascar adopt a Makoa as identity (Boyer-Rossol 2014). Makoa is used to describe dark-skinned folks with kinky coiled hair or "a strong, hardworking man" (Boyer-Rossol 2014, p.196). This "African-Malagasy" identity is traced to enslaved prisoners from East Africa who were brought to Madagascar in the nineteenth century.

Further, in terms of imagining new identities through hiphop culture, the Senegalese movement "Y'en A Marre" (Enough is enough) sought to topple Abdolaye Wade and create what they called a "New Type of Senegalese" (NTS). The founders of Y'en a Marre included the rap group Keur Gui, made up of Mbessane Seck (Kilifeu), Cheikh Omar Cyrille (Thiat) and Fadel Barro an activist journalist. A number of rap artists would later join the movement, including Malal Tall (Fou Malade). Interestingly, Gueye (2013) observes that the idea for the movement was hatched during a blackout that had lasted for twenty hours. (Chronic black outs have also plagued Ghana, particularly between years 2004-2005 and 2009-2011.) The members had become fatigued from simply critiquing the state of affairs without direct action. As Fadel Barro points out, we "wanted to let the Senegalese people understand that it was time to end this fatalism, this habit of keeping one's hands folded and doing nothing. It was time to be involved in the running of the country." (Gueye 2013, p.25).

Y'en A Marre sought to prevent President Wade from seeking a third term and proposed amendments to the constitution aimed to reduce the required run off vote percentage from 50% to 25%. There was also a proposal to create a Vice President Position modeled after the U.S. governance structure. However, as Gueye (2013) observes, many folks deemed this as Wade's attempt to place his son in line for the presidency.

Y'en Marre, naturally, actively opposed these reforms. Beyond the outspoken criticisms of the Wade government in their music, the artists also took their activism to the streets. They adopted what they called "'Urban Guerrilla Poetry,' revolutionary rap music they performed in public spaces. Derived from the concept of "urban guerilla

warfare;" urban guerrilla poetry used rap to mount attacks against state officials in the city and escaped uncaught (Geuye 2013, p.27). This approach was necessary because the Wade regime had been clamping down on press freedoms and general freedom of expression. For instance, when Wade banned the "peaceful demonstrations, rap musicians hopped on buses singing and distributing flyers" (p.27). Thus, Gueye (2013) argues, using urban guerrilla poetry the rappers refused to be silenced and weaponized their rap lyrics against a President who in their eyes had become an "enemy of the nation" (p.27).

Importantly, Gueye (2013) asserts that these artists lived their mission by "embodying the values of the New Type of Senegalese" (p.39). Similarly at the screening of Rama Thiaw's documentary about Y'en marre titled, "The revolution won't be televised," she argued that these rappers actually "lived the revolution" they did not just talk about it.[49] Wade would go onto finally lose the election and Y'en marre's victory, Geuye argues, marked the return of power to the people who had now become "re-invented because they [understood] their right and recognize their duty" (p.39). Now they are more aware of their power over elective political figures and in this way, she asserts, they have become this New Type of Senegalese (NTS).

Y'en marre's quest to create a New Type of Senegalese is instructive here. It draws connections between creative expression and direct action in matters of social change. It also shows how an artist's performance persona almost replaces their original personal identities. In that way, the persona is a reinvention of the self that becomes a

[49] I was fortunate to be present at the screening which was held at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

model for others to potentially emulate as a way of also reinventing themselves. Through their music these rappers were able to construct and experiment with other realities and ways of being (Auslander 2004). In the section that follows, I explore similar concerns around the production of new identities by examining the lives and performances of three Ghanaian artists: Wanlov the Kubolor, Akan, and Ayat.

Artist Profiles

Figure 5. 1: Wanlov the Kubolor, Accra, 2017

Wanlov the Kubolor, also known as Emmanuel Owusu-Bonsu, was born in Romania in 1980, to a Ghanaian father and Romanian mother. He grew up mostly in Ghana and attended to the elite Adisadel College for high school. After high school, he moved to the United States to study computer science and business administration in

Baylor Texas. A year and half into the program, Wanlov dropped out due to financial challenges. Later, he would lose his student visa status and would not be able to work legally. In fact, on his way to a gig on a motorbike he got arrested. The police had asked him to stop but he refused and this initiated a chase which included the use of a helicopter. He would spend weeks in jail which had an adverse affect on his schooling. Wanlov would later enter music school but his admission was rescinded because they had accidentally enrolled him.

Between 2001 and 2006, Wanlov survived in the U.S. by committing internet fraud, while music remained a hobby, until 2004 when he met Gyedu Blay Ambolley. Ambolley began to teach Wanlov how to perform with live bands and Marwan Mugraby showed him how to play various local instruments. Later, Wanlov formed a band and started playing live music. In 2007, he reunited with Mensa and by 2008 they formed the Fokn Bois. Wanlov's first album Green card, released in 2007 dealt with some of his experiences during his seven-year stint in the US. His other solo albums include Yellow Card, Brown Card: African Gypsy, and Orange Card: Fruitopian Rap. Meanwhile, the Fokn bois with their self-named genre, gospelporn, have released Fokn wit Ewe and Fokn ode to Ghana. Wanlov also directs music videos under the name Wanlov Kubolor Cini (short for cinema).

Wanlov's performance of masculinity within the genre of hiplife challenges the typical macho veneer of young urban male rappers; he wears a wrap and walks barefooted. In his "My Toto" (2017) (translates to my vagina) video directed by Mutombo da Poet, he flips the script and objectifies himself revealing the challenges with

the normalized objectification and hypersexualization of women in hiplife videos.[50] On the other hand, Wanlov's song "Colony Cleanse," featuring Kwame Write and Mensa, contributes to the discourse on decolonialization. In the song, he depicts the colonized mind constipated with colonial miseducation that needs a colonial cleanse. The "colony cleanser" should include African history, literature and a dissolution of borders, the latter he regards as a "cancer." Amongst the three rappers I examine, Wanlov is perhaps the most creative when it comes to developing characters for performances. In fact, the Fokin Bois' Fokin Party concert on December 9, 2017 was the most entertaining event I had attended. Wanlov and Mensa's humor and scathing critique of society skillfully integrated theatrical drama with rap performances in what they call their "accutronic rap theatre." He is also the oldest of the three artists I examine and the most widely known. Wanlov has five children; each with women of Ghanaian, American, Danish, British, and Japanese descent respectively.

Figure 5. 2: Akan performing at the Yoyotinz shrine during the Chale Wote Arts Festival, Accra, 2016

[50] See "My Toto." Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4qxvovzFKY&feature=youtu.be

Akan, born Bernard Kwabena Appiah in 1990 in Accra, went to St Johns Senior High School where he studied general arts, a combination of History, Economics, and Geography. He did not proceed to tertiary education after senior high school and instead worked two jobs for a year and half. During the day he taught English and Social Studies in a primary school and at night he worked as a receptionist in hotel. He released the "Akan EP" in 2015 and two years later, his first album "Onipa Akuma" to much acclaim. Collaborators, like photographer Francis Kokoroko, who shot his album cover, talked about how Akan's creativity on the album challenged him artistically. During the making of "Akan EP," Akan would abandon his prior performance persona Quabena Shy. For Akan, music became a serious option for him at a point where he needed to do something with his life after high school. Akan, then Quabena Shy, would later meet Ayat during a rap competition; they would form the group As Wholes.

Figure 5. 3: Ayat performing at the Yoyotinz shrine during the Chale Wote Arts Festival, Accra, 2016

Ayat, born Ayat Maqwan Salis in 1990, studied visual arts in West African Secondary school and then studied graphic and web designing at IPMC an IT training

institute. He would then enroll to study communication at Radford University but dropped out after a week. Ayat has released a number of Eps under his former name Billy Banger. He had initially wanted to be a footballer but he realized that he lacked the talent. In his community, Madina, Ayat organizes Madfest (Music of African Descent festival) to showcase the talents in his community. In this way, Ayat participates in what I call the decolonial praxis of reclaiming of space – a decolonial project of physically claiming space from the religious preachers, church posters and other religious activities that are so dominant throughout Accra's landscape.

Nurturing the Social Rebel

When I asked the three performers if they thought artists had a role to play in making social change, with the exception of Wanlov, they all concurred. For Akan, deciding to pursue music as a profession in Ghana is already initiating social change. As he notes, "I think being able to come out and be doing the music alone is like a step ahead, being able to kill the perception that society [has] about me." The "perception" here is the stigma associated with creatives and creative work, particularly in popular entertainment in Ghana. Thus, he asserts "being an artist alone is like the first step to breaking that rule," the rule, he refers to here is parental expectations about future career choices.

In addition, for Akan the artist-as-change-maker has a responsibility to the community. He recalls that after the release of "Akan EP," which attracted some buzz, he noticed that his "little brothers in house" and others were looking up to him. Some even dressing like him, he recounts, "the kids are like they want to be like me, they want to rap, they listen to music.... So it got my attention that these people are looking at me.

These people are listening to me." Akan feels a sense of responsibility to his community particularly the younger children. For him, "being an artist comes with that responsibility that you need to accept...people are looking up to you. You need to check yourself."

For Ayat, he wants his music to inspire people, particularly the "Hausa boys." As he notes (in pidgin), "Hausa people get looked down upon" and as such he wants:

> the hausa boy know say he also a Ghanaian and whatever he want do he go fit do. He want play ball, he want go school, he want do music, chale he want paint whatever dey your mind inside, you go fit do and do am equally or even much better than whoever.

Ayat recalls incidents during interviews where the interviewer expresses shock at his articulation in English. He asserts, one woman interviewer remarked, "wow you speak so well." To which Ayat points out, "what are you trying to say… why Hausa people no dey go school..." For Ayat, the music performance platform allows him to become a legible model of what is possible for other young men in his community. In fact, as noted, the community music festival he organizes with his personal funds clearly demonstrates his commitment to nurturing and supporting talents in his community. In 2016 he revealed that he had to sell his "TV, PC, Speakers, Sneakers, Clothing, and even [my] Microwave"[51] to organize the festival.

On the other hand, for Wanlov, music making is primarily for his therapeutic release. For him, the creative performance heals and rejuvenates the self. He notes,

> I am making music I want, [not] to stop people from doing this or that it's just me expressing myself for my own therapeutic needs. It's like me talking to my shrink, so like the microphone, the medium is my shrink...so whatever happens

[51] See "Ghanaian Rapper sells His Personal Belongings to Host A Concert in Madina." Retrieved from http://www.yfmghana.com/2016/12/27/ghanaian-rapper-sells-his-personal-belongings-to-host-a-concert-in-madina/

> beyond that I don't expect much of it. I just enjoy the release and the relief of putting it out there

Wanlov does, however, point out that he not only wants his "music to comfort" and "feed" him but to also "nurture others." However, he quickly notes that his performances are not about him channeling a specific agenda to change the world, but he is fine if that happens as a result of his work. In responding to why his music does not enjoy commercial airplay in Ghana, he observes:

> …because most of it is telling people to free themselves and think for themselves or is showing examples of someone thinking from themselves and being free. It's not conducive to the system and then the system spreads this message

He argues that:

> …people are so protective and so [reverent] of their religion that sometimes your audacity to challenge something they see as so huge and unchallengeable and not seeing lightning strike you the next moment makes them question their religion and then maybe makes them become like a different kind of religious person or non-religious. So sometimes those are byproducts which we welcome…

Indeed, more than any other artist in Ghana, Wanlov's music deals with some of the hot button topics in Ghanaian public discourse. His songs highlight LGBTQ rights and he frequently criticizes prominent and influential religious institutions and figures. In his song, "Very Soon," he predicts the deaths of prominent Ghanaian and Nigerian pastors. He predicts that Duncan Williams will die in a car crash, TB Joshua in a "building collapse" and Pastor Chris from a "bleaching cream overdose." Essentially, in the song, Wanlov flips the practice of how some of preachers predict the death of some of their congregants. As, he argues, "we feel oppressed by these various religions" (Hiphop Africa Interview). This becomes more interesting upon learning that Wanlov's father is a pastor. Similarly, Akan's mother is a Christian prophetess while Ayat's grandmother is also a Muslim Mallam.

Outspoken direct challenges, by performers, to highly respected institutions like the Christian church and political figures is not new. Young people drawing on their collective agency to challenge and hold political power is well-documented in Ghana. In Kofi Agovi's piece, "The King is not above insult," he examines avudwene which are Nzema festival songs performed by young men who offer social commentary and critique of authority (Agovi 1995). (Other communities in Ghana have similar traditions which are still practiced today.) The songs are produced from collated information garnered from the community and as such, these performers articulate the interests and concerns of the people. Three groups of artists are involved in the development and performance of the avudwene, namely the ezomenlema, the kodokuma and the awuakama. The ezomenlema compose the content of the song and tell it to the kodokuma who turns it into a song and then teaches the awuakama how to sing it.

The singers are well aware of their power as the young men who have been entrusted by the ancestors to deliver messages to those living. In turn, Agovi notes, these performances are undergirded with both political and religious imperatives "which contributes greatly to [young men's] sense of moral assertiveness and apparent postures of self-righteousness"(p.49). It then follows that the directness of these scathing critiques reveal that no authority is above criticism and emphasize the "value of openness" (p.59-p.60). As such, insults like " 'fool,' 'nincompoop,' 'useless' and 'imbecile'" are common in the songs and are freely directed at the figures and institutions of authority (p.59). In this way, Agovi argues, these epithets become deliberate communicative practices to hold power accountable in a public manner. He contends that these performers model the "freedom to disagree" which reveal that freedom to expression is needed for healthy

governance. He notes, the young men use the relative immunity of the festival to employ insults as a vehicle of public policy. Indeed, Agovi's work contradicts, in some respects, Shipley (2012) and Osumare's (2012) assertion that young people in Ghana are unable to voice their opinions. Admittedly, it can be argued, that the liminality of festival spaces is the only protection afforded to this direct frontal criticism of power.

In many ways, perhaps the liminal qualities of making culture such as hiplife music and video production also afford young people possibilities to engage practices that may shift the dispositions of power to cause social change. As noted, Wanlov does not necessarily believe the artist has an inherent role to play in causing social change. Unlike Akan, the older Wanlov believes that this responsibility must not be an obligation for the artist. As he understands, it would be unfair to have those kinds of expectations of an artist "who hasn't been sensitized to certain things in society and suddenly has success to go and learn about the world or stuff and start becoming some kind of responsible person... The artist is the artist so you get what you get." Wanlov is quick to point out that he is concerned with "societal problems" like environmental pollution because these are issues he is personally cares about. They are concerns that emanate from his experience and not necessarily an "agenda" he is pursuing. Through his use of the term "agenda," it appears that Wanlov does not want to be perceived as someone who is on mission to change the world per se. Rather, it is through his experiences that he comes to care about these things. It seems that he does not want his persona in the music sphere to be burdened by expectations of a consistent social activism.

Beyond questions of artistic responsibility, I am interested in tracing the musical careers of Wanlov, Akan and Ayat, by specifically looking at how high schools have

become nurturing grounds for hiplife talent.[52] For instance, Henry KD, a cinematographer and director, snuck a camera acquired from his uncle to school and made some extra money by taking pictures of his school mates. For Wanlov and Akan senior high school was a place to nurture their musical ambitions. Wanlov started writing his own raps and recording in high school. Akan initially wrote poetry but after seeing the attention other rappers were receiving, he decided to switch to rap. High school, for many cultural producers I interviewed, was the incubation grounds for their work. A number of people I talked to were entertainment prefects; they were responsible for putting together the school dance parties, movie nights on Saturdays and plays. For instance, Prince Ibam (a cinematographer and music video director), as a general arts student became the entertainment prefect from his first to third year in St Seprin Minor Seminary, North Sawla. He recalls, without electricity they relied on a generator to organize and design entertainment programs as well as directing the drama group. He also DJ'd for school jams.

I believe that the liminal spaces in high school are places where these artists develop their talents and build creative relationships with their peers. Osumare (2012), for instance, observes that Akyeame, Okyeame Quophi and Kwame met in Kumasi Anglican Secondary School. The extracurricular sites are often free from the direct surveillance of the teachers since they are usually not present for the Saturday entertainment nights. Further, these events are usually organized and managed by the students. Thus, these spaces were relatively autonomous and ideal for students attempting

[52] John Collins (2007) points out that musical education was downgraded in the 1980s in the Junior High schools and thus by the 1990s young people adopted the more techno-pop approach to music making.

to experiment with creative expression. For instance, at the annual fresher's night, first year students, typically in the boarding houses were required to engage in all sorts of performances from dancing to rapping. Mantse Aryeequaye – who did visual arts in high school — fondly recalls his 15-year-old self performing Reggie Rockstone's "Tsooboi" during his fresher night in Presbyterian Boys' High School (Presec). Students had to be innovative and use their limited resources in school to stage performances. These, mostly, boarding schools had strict guidelines on what clothes and items were permitted on campus. My participants' experiences performing in high school mirrors my own adventures rapping on the stage in Presec.

In the high schools, the cultural producers I interviewed, also connected with friends who taught and encouraged them to nurture their talent. Wanlov recalls how a senior called Salim Ahmed helped him write his own raps. Indeed, looking closely at the journey of these artists we see how friends and acquaintances have encouraged their artistic growth. After high school, Ayat's friend took him to the studio where he freestyled and was encouraged to develop his rapping. Akan's friend from school invited him to a studio, then he met Ayat who had a home studio, which later lead to meeting the producer Twisted Waves. Akan informed me that since he started rapping he has not had to pay for studio time.

The community of creatives have a way of recognizing and nurturing talent which is not solely based on immediate financial considerations. For instance, multimedia artist Alex Wondergem asked that we place emphasis on barter as a currency within Accra's creative community. He traded beats with Wanlov to get a music video. Bright Ackwerh, the satirical cartoonist who designed the album art for Wanlov's "Orange Card," is

almost always spotted publicly in a Yoyotinz—hiphop archiving website— shirt because they first put in the public spotlight. Shipley (2012) also shows that in the production of his album, Mensa's collaborations were not mainly financial exchanges. Payment was typically negotiated after the fact as collaborators see their labor as investments that may yield future success (p.208). Productive social relations are regarded as important within these informal exchanges. However, this is not without its complications as the intersections of friendship and work can lead to misunderstandings. Notwithstanding, collaborations and informal exchange networks based on "friendship and camaraderie" have been an important catalyst for the development and circulation of hiplife music (Shipley, 2012, p.207).

In my interviews with cultural producers, I observed that some of them were high school celebrity performers. According to Mantse Aryeequaye, his rap group Funky Functure, were the top rappers in the high school scene. They would get invited to top radio programs on Groove FM during the early years of private Ghanaian media. Mantse recalls, "imagine being in Presec [and] you're [on] radio, and private radio was fresh [at the time]." It is unsurprising that the high schools became one of the important grounds for hiplife talent development. Paa K, former manager of Reggie Rockstone, told me how they used to organize shows in the senior high schools to amass a following for the newly named genre. In addition, high school was often a place to acquire or develop what Dako (2002) refers to as "student pidgin," a language often spoken by educated men. It originates from the "high-prestige multi-ethnic coastal secondary schools" and is spoken across the various universities (Dako 2002, p.54). This student pidgin also features

heavily in hiplife music and culture. In fact, I would argue student pidgin is the language that undergirds hiplife music production, circulation and consumption.

"Akorabone" a Model of Urban Youth Rebellion

Wanlov and Ayat dropped out of university while Akan did not want to proceed with formal education after senior high school. Wanlov ran into financial problems in schooling in a U.S. university and Ayat left Radford University after a week having grown disinterested in pursuing a course on Communication. In most places, dropping out of school to pursue a career in the arts is often frowned upon and may inhibit family support. For Akan, while his mother has "been super cool, supportive," when he announced that "I wanted to do music" his mother still insisted he "go to school." He adds, despite the parental "pressure… to go to school" and perhaps pursue a career in medicine he insists that they must consider what he is actually able to do for himself. As noted, the creative path signaled social rebellion, a deviation from the parental expectations. Yet, Paa K tells me how Reggie Rockstone's father St. Osei, a fashion designer, funded the beginning of Rockstone's career so they had the freedom to concentrate on the music.

But even cultural producers I talked to who wanted to proceed to schools like the Ghana institute of Journalism (GIJ) and National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) may not receive parental approval and support. For instance, Mantse Aryeequaye's father wanted him to go to KNUST and eventually do law. He disobeyed, which caused some tension at home that ultimately forced him to move out and temporarily stay with his grandmother. There he would apply to GIJ and gain admission to pursue photojournalism. Meanwhile Mantse's mother had been supportive of his rap career in

high school; she would give him money and sometimes buy clothes for his performances. Interestingly, I tended to notice that mothers seemed more supportive of their children's decisions to pursue creative work than fathers who favored the traditional professions (lawyer, doctor etc.) I also met a graduate of NAFTI who had to pay her own first semester tuition because her father did not want her studying film.

Sometimes staying in school ironically relieves potential creatives from parental pressure as the silence/approval allows them to explore their artistic ambitions. Khadi, a dancer with a degree in physics, pointed out that her parents have largely been supportive because she stayed in school. However, she continues, "there are moments when they realize I'm doing more dancing than physics" and they become worried that the she may be "taking this dance thing too serious and abandoning … academics." However, she reminds them that she does "both" which assures them that she can utilize her science education. Yet, she states, "if I woke up and said ok I just want to do dance it would be a problem. World War III in my household...I can sense that fear in them." Indeed, it appears a large reason for parents' apprehension about their children doing creative work is because of the precarity. The Ghanaian music 'industry' has inadequate structures to allow artists to make a successful living. Most performers make money from doing gigs and not enough from their own music. Wanlov told me shooting music videos was a regular income stream.

Stories of parental disapproval of creative work were not uncommon. To a large extent, in Ghana the choice to be an artist is already deemed to be a deviation from social expectations. Indeed, there is joke about African parenting and children's career options. It goes like this: African career options 1) Doctor; 2) Lawyer; 3) Engineer; and 4)

Disgrace to the family.[53] Khadi notes, "if you think about [it] like we don't respect arts here, it's our hobby...and then your parents want you to do law, engineering or medicine." Her remark underscores the professions parents often encourage their children to pursue. I had friends whose parents demanded that they do Science instead of visual arts in high school. As someone who pursued visual arts in high school, a course often reserved for the "academically weak" students and those considered troublesome, I know these concerns intimately. Meanwhile, the science students were considered brainy, smart and cool.

For women, the ambition to pursue a career in popular entertainment often comes with added challenges (chapter 4). As rapper Fu comments about her rap career, "the family is like you're a female, you shouldn't be doing boy boy things...like you should be wearing skirts." Fu would stop rapping due to the family pressure and the fact that at the time hiphop was not too popular. However, later she would restart her rap ambition, she states, "as you go on, if something is really in you...no matter how much you settle for like normal, it will still kind of mess up...you'll have to do something about it." In 2015, I recall observing a party themed music video shoot in which some of the women models hid in the background of the video. During my discussions with them they informed me that they did not want their parents to see them in the video. Indeed, the crew members of this party video shoot also noted that it was difficult to recruit women models because of the stigma associated with women in music videos.

[53] See tweet. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/bubuwyla/status/594790237777321984

While women may face disapproval from their family they also face the challenge of entering the mostly male dominated creative spaces. Recently, KOD, a popular figure in Ghanaian entertainment, seemed to imply that women who were too visible, "all over the place" are not marriageable.[54] Also some male managers claimed that women artists were "hard to handle" and one even argued that "female artistes work well when they're in relationships with their managers than with someone else.[55]"

Let me return to this notion that simply pursing a creative career in popular performance marks you as a social rebel. Khadi observes, "the perception with artists in general is that we are rebels and we don't fit [in], we are not normal in quotes and we are wild." In Akan's song, "Obiba JK," he invokes the figure of the "akorabone" (bad child), one who goes out of the house and engages in mischief that might then bring home problems that may become a financial burden to the family. Indeed, in the song Akan likens the conduct of the akorabone to Kwame Nkrumah, and reminds us of Nkrumah's stubbornness—akorabone behavior – in the struggle against British colonialism. In an interview with Yoyotinz, Akan notes:

> …I grew up rather calm and docile and that was how I was raised. We had this notion in our family, to be calm, cool and accept things how they were offered. I'm still cool though… Until I started asking questions, feeding my curiosity and standing for who I'm rather than who people thought I'm and should be. I mean, using music to express my thoughts and ideas. And that has been my biggest challenge. So the "Akorabone" reference, is standing for the new me, and questioning the rules we are made to obey[56].

---

[54] See "KOD ripped 'all over' social media for comment on John Dumelo's wife." Retrieved from https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/KOD-ripped-all-over-social-media-for-comment-on-John-Dumelo-s-wife-651261

[55] See "Female artistes hard to handle - Managers claim." Retrieved from https://www.graphic.com.gh/entertainment/showbiz-news/female-artistes-hard-to-handle-managers-claim.html

[56] See "Akan; an okyeame for Ebibiman." Retrieved from http://yoyotinz.tumblr.com/post/141212760534/akan-an-okyeame-for-ebibiman

Within the popular Ghanaian imaginary the akorabone figure is similar to the kubolor, a Ga phrase which describes someone (often boys) who is hardly at home because they are often wandering about and indulging in all sorts of mischief. The kubolor theme emerges in Wanlov's music video "Kokonsa" (2008). The title means gossip and the song is about people spreading untruths/half-truths about him. It is a narrative video shot in docu-drama style. This approach is thematic of Wanlov's cinematic style in general and is like his pidgin musical Cov Ov Moni 1 and 2, with co-creator Mensa. "Kokonsa" (2008) takes place in the present tense and all the scenes are shot outdoors. The dialogue orienting us to what is happening is spoken in pidgin and Ga, the song itself is performed in English, Ga and Twi.

The video captures the story of Wanlov on his way to a pool party. At the beginning of the video Wanlov receives a phone call at communication center. On the call is a young woman who invites him to her pool party in this middle-class neighborhood. However, there are people at the party who do not want to associate with a "kubolor" who wears a wrap and is always in a black singlet. They protest: "we no want no kubolor boy for here." Despite overhearing their complaints on the phone call, Wanlov proceeds to the party with some of his guys. The fellow kubolors he was just playing some card games with. They first jump into a red pick-up, opting to sit in the bucket even though there were unoccupied seats. The truck eventually runs out of diesel and they continue on a local hand pushed truck. Upon arriving at the house a man at the gate prevents them from going inside. They do not leave but decide to play what appears to be chaskele, an improvised local game like baseball. A stick serves as the bat while the ball is a crushed can. The batsman would accidentally hit the ball into the house where

the party is being held and the young woman who invited the Wanlov finds the ball and realizes he is outside playing. She and four other women from the party go outside and join the kubolors playing chaskele in this upper middle-class neighborhood street bounded by white walls. The men at the party peep over the wall to see where the women went. The kubolor boys, as it were, got the young women out of the privileged party space to play outside. The kubolor life appears fun as the women are seen smiling and having a good time while they are taught to play chaskele. Importantly, in the video, kubolor life is presented as a model of freedom, in terms of personal appearance and also navigating the world carefree of social judgement. The young women escape the confines of their upper middle-class prison and participate in freedom-making with kubolors in this upscale neighborhood.

Figure 5. 4: Upper class home featured in Kokonsa (2008

Figure 5. 5: Wanlov depicted in a low income neighborhood with a large open gutter in “Kokonsa” 2008

Figure 5. 6: Woman who invited Wanlov to the party peers over the whole to see who threw the object into the house, “Kokonsa” (2008)

Figure 5. 7: Wanlov assists the woman hosting the party to play chaskele, a local game

In the video, Wanlov's kubolor credentials are established in a number of ways: through a sense of place, emerging from the space with the polluted stream/gutter; climbing on the back of truck instead of sitting in the empty seats; using the push truck; and then the mode of dress, wrap and no footwear. In fact, after receiving the invitation he does not even change. He arrives at the party in the same clothes he was wearing while playing with the guys on the ground. In addition, the gossips in the video speculate whether he is gay because of his "skirt" while the elderly woman speaking Ga claims that people like Wanlov, who come from overseas (read: Euro-America) do not have anything and are dirty. Both folks in the upper-class neighborhoods and the lower income spaces gossip about Wanlov, highlighting that the kubolor does not fit in any of these worlds. Incidentally, all the women featured are dark skinned which moves away from the common practice of a light skinned woman lead. As noted, earlier music videos typically tend to feature light skinned women in prominent roles.

At the same time the video reflects some of the prominent themes in Wanlov's work including his concern for: LGBQ rights; colonial aspirations of success still anchored on Britishness; and environmental pollution, the littered gutter. In the video, Wanlov navigates a huge gutter littered with filth, in contrast to the opening scene which highlights the opulence of upper-class life, a house with a pool. The water in the pool looks clean while the water in the big gutter is polluted. His music video, "For the river" (2012), is a social commentary on the "borla" that engulfs rivers. As "plastic" has turned rivers into "drastic dumps" while "sewage and electronic waste" have caused the "sweet" river to have a "toxic taste."

Clearly, he marks the kubolor folks as signifiers of the poorly developed areas of Accra that have visible signs of environmental pollution. Vernallis (2004) observes that rap videos often emphasize a sense of place, as neighborhoods are depicted in identifiable ways. The performers also seem to "belong to the place" (p.78). However, Wanlov straddles both worlds - the kubolor places and the upscale neighborhoods. In some respects the video is also autobiographical since it deals with Wanlov's return to Ghana from the US. As one gossip claimed that he was deported and had no money.

Here, I want to shift focus to this notion of the people complaining or talking about your "matter." Admittedly, the akorabone behavior will elicit complaints from the family. The theme of gossiping/complaints is referenced in Akan's song "Akoraa Bonii Asitina" (the life of a bad child). In the song, he talks about how people say things about him and asserts, "Mu kasa bre mua be gyai" (When you talk and get tired you will eventually stop). Akan laments about how he is always insulted at home and because of this when he goes out he does not return at night to sleep. The gossiping and complaints are also captured in Wanlov's "Konkonsa."

Of course, this is unsurprising, those who deviate from the social norms become visible targets who must be made to conform in order to realign to existing social norms. This gossiping becomes an instrument used to coerce young people to return to societies expected pathway. It also serves as deterrence for anybody who would wish to follow in their deviant footsteps— the social cost of deviating from the script is apparent. These complaints are more pronounced for those artists who still live with parents and family since surveillance may be high. For young people like Ayat and Akan, it is quite common to still live in your family homes because the cost of renting a place is expensive.

Potential tenants are required to pay, sometimes up to two years, rent in advance. Thus, these artists who still live at home are still under the daily surveillance of the parents and extended family who may complain about their children's non-conforming career path and self-fashioning.

Waithood — "a prolonged period of suspension between childhood and adulthood"— helps capture the experience of young creatives who still live under the care of their parents and how that might impact their creative output (Honwana 2015). The term was first coined by Dianne Singerman (2007) and later used by Alcinda Honwana (2014) to examine how young Africans' entry into adulthood was delayed or even denied. Though their age may position them as adults, Honwana points out, these young people do not have the "social markers of adulthood: earning a living, being independent, establishing families, providing for their offspring and other relatives, and becoming taxpayers" (Honwana 2014, p.1). One rapper recounted how he was looking to leave his parents' house because they were complaining about him coming home late at night after his performances. For some of these artists, tensions from living with parents are compounded because creative work does not often involve the socially expected 8:00am - 5:00pm work schedule. This non-conformity to regular scheduled work is sometimes interpreted as laziness.

Akorabone and the Body

In this way, many of the cultural producers I talked to subvert the respectability politics and social expectations not only around "regular work" but also on the issue of self-presentation in Ghana. All the three men have their hair grown out; Akan has tattoos; Ayat has a nose ring; and Wanlov wears a wrap and walks barefooted. Wanlov and Ayat

also have locks while Akan braids his hair. We had many conversations around how young men's hair is constantly policed during my time within the creative community. I remember two separate incidents within the creative community where friends would suddenly show up with short hair and when asked they would say "pressure" from house. Akan recalls a conversation with his mother, a Christian Prophetess:

> …I remember having this…heated argument with her, [about] my hair. She was like, the bible says a man isn't supposed to leave the hair. I was like no. What is she saying, that if a man is not supposed to have …hair then a man wouldn't have been born with hair. I would have been born bald with like sakora and then my hair would not grow at all.

Akan had initially attempted growing his hair but he had to cut because "the pressure was too much." But this time around he "was like yo fuck it. I am doing this thing…. everybody that comes in, the aunties, the uncles like yo cut your hair." He adds,

> I told my mom, chale it's me when I stand in the mirror with my hair I feel comfortable. Leaving my hair was one of the signs of me attaining freedom. Self-freedom for myself. Like it felt so free. I belong to myself, I don't have to do this because somebody needs me to do it, I mean it's me.

For Akan, growing out his hair was a sign of freedom. Ayat also recalls how his grandmother, a religious teacher, complains about his hair. To understand how men's hair is policed and regarded as a sign of deviancy let me recount an incident that occurred during my research work in Ghana. At around 2:00 am, I was returning from a film production set with some artist friends— one with locks and other outgrown hair—when our taxi was stopped at the evening police check point. The armed police ordered us out of the car and commanded us to empty our bags. The police would notice my friend's scissors and ask him to be careful carrying that object at night because other police officers, who may not be "correct," will claim that he is carrying a weapon to commit robbery. The police profiling of people with locks is not uncommon, often they assume

these people might be carrying marijuana which is illegal in Ghana. Yet, historically, locks have been worn by Asante and Yoruba priests and more recently, by the Kenyan independence Mau Mau fighters.

Indeed, in the case of Wanlov, self-presentation has been crucial to his continued popularity in Ghana. In a discussion with Msia Clark on the Hip Hop Africa podcast, he notes:

> …because of the way I present myself, my dressing and the fact that I don't wear shoes and stuff and my frank observations on society that has kept me relevant over the years, really more than my music. I find I charge more money to just show up somewhere than I charge to actually perform.[57]

Indeed, while Wanlov's music is often absent from mainstream media, he makes several media appearances because of his 'controversial' personality. One must note that Wanlov's performance of 'celebrity' appears to be radically different from some of the mainstream hiplife artists. He rides his bike through town and sometimes performs in the market places and bus stations.[58] As noted, he informed me that one of the reasons he stopped wearing shoes ten years ago was that he was more comfortable with allowing his bare feet to acquire "touch memories" of the places he visited. He claims he has developed an addiction from the various sensations he gets from different surfaces that wearing shoes again will be numbing; like "closing up a sixth sense." Also, he did not particularly like how footwear became a competition amongst young folks (during his stint in the US) and how one was perceived based on their footwear.

[57] See "HHAP EPISODE 16: Wanlov the Kubolor " Retrieved from https://hiphopafrican.com/2017/11/01/hhap-episode-16-wanlov-the-kubolor/
[58] See "Wanlov the Kubolor and the spirit of forward thinking." Retrieved from https://africasacountry.com/2018/05/wanlov-the-kubolors-spirit-of-forward-thinking

It is also quite common to walk through North Kaneshie and see Wanlov hanging out with folks trying to make a living on the hard streets of Accra. What he calls the "communal exchange", he says, is "one of my favorite things to do." It appears that when some artists seem to want to restrict their availability/access to their audiences and just everyday people Wanlov does the opposite. Of course, I must acknowledge that celebrity attention can be crippling and inhibits the artist's privacy. Indeed, as Wanlov himself observes, he doesn't know whether "later it will take its toll." Wanlov is not just a rebel socially, but within the Ghanaian music industry as well. He lives the kubolor the life.

The artist as social rebel reveals the refusal to be one of the cogs in the socio-economic wheel. Yet, this rebelliousness is also borne out of the desire to perform fulfilling work. The passionate attachment to music making is reflective of what McRobbie (2016) calls passionate work. Specifically, where individuals attempt to derive pleasure from work by harnessing and profiting from their inner talents rather than wasting them away on a regular daily job. Yet, she argues, in the case of labor reforms in the UK, the charge to be creative markets the risk associated with self-employment with excitement and potential reward. The artist, the model of the entrepreneur, becomes the answer to the problem of waithood. As McRobbie (2016) points out, artistic labor becomes some sort of model for how other careers look like in a neoliberal economy (p.64).

Naming the Akorabone

Naming and practices of naming offer another avenue for creative expression that is important to the development of identity (Omoniyi 2006, p. 203). In the case of Ghana, Irene Odetei (1989) remarks that Ga (my ethnic group) names are essentially addresses;

she meant this literally. She points out that the Ga naming system provides the town; quarter (Akutso); ancestral home; patrilineage (We); seniority in relation to siblings; and special circumstances surrounding a child's birth (p.34). With regards to artists, while their personal names are relatively fixed their performance personae change overtime to reflect their developing ideas about themselves and their relationship to the world. For these artists the creation of a new performance personae name inaugurates the reinvention of self (Rodriguez, 2016). I want to turn to how these artists upon, becoming ideologically conscious of the type of music they wanted to make, adopted new performance names and personae.

For the three artists, their current performance names are a pivotal aspect of their 're-existence' as performers and people. When I asked Akan about the thought behind his initial name, Quabena Shy, he could not really say much aside noting that he was a shy person. Ayat, formerly Billy Banger, claimed, he did not even know how he came up with this name. For Wanlov, Spooky was his nickname when he was in he was Junior Secondary School.

Their name changes appeared to signal the moment they decided to become serious with their music as a form of labor—music making as a source of income. It was no longer a hobby they used to indulge in like it was for Akan and Wanlov in senior high school. Yet, at the same time it also underscored, in some sense, the reflections they were having about themselves. For instance, Akan describes being "exhausted" from performing Quabena Shy whose rap themes featured cars and women – the central symbols of male success. As Quabena Shy, he was not "getting recognition" and he also "felt so tired." Indeed, he wondered, "what is it that I am doing with my life? I need to

see a progress or I need to see some change." During our discussion, he reflected on how his lyrical content did not translate to his personal life as he "had this feeling like something not going right." For Akan, Quabena Shy as a persona was going nowhere musically and professionally. Spooky, now Wanlov, initially rapped about how he was "cooler," "a good rapper" and using "word play," "rhyming" and being witty and funny.

The change of name was also an appeal to Ghanaianess, Africaness, and blackness. It was an attempt, if you will, at bridging the gap between the lived reality of the artist and their performance personae. It ushered their desire to be more authentic. Akan wanted a name that would be "something people could relate to" and that he "could stand on and say. Yeah I am going there I stand for this and I can talk about this.... show that I am Ghanaian or I'm Akan."

Ayat, as Billy Banger, states, "I was like chale me I want change my name ooh cos the Billy banger, I don't know even where I go get that name from. I really can't even have story of, oh this where I had the name from." Kayso, a music producer and collaborator, would suggest that he just use his own name. A reluctant Billy Banger becomes Ayat and goes onto produce his first Hausa song which would result in significant notoriety. Later, he would travel to U.S. at a time when his music was attracting attention and he gaining popularity. Ayat recalls that, in 2014 as Billy Banger, if he had travelled overseas he states "like me I never go come Ghana sef" because he was not particularly serious with the music, and also like many young Ghanaians he nurtured ambitions of traveling to "abrokyire" (US or Europe). Yet, he asserts, "once I switched and I was like true to myself …and started doing music from…within or

whatever, that be the time I was like you know what I can do this and you understand e go make sense e go inspire other people to do am and all of that."

On the other hand, Wanlov the Kubolor was inspired by the people he started listening to – Nas, Talib Kweli, Sizzla, Mos Def and Wyclef – who he observed "someway somehow said the greeting one love" in the beginning of their songs. Nas had a song called one love while Talib would mount the stage and say one love. These influences and the fact that he had become "conscious of world events and environmental stuff" lead him to think that it would be interesting to use that name. Yet, Wanlov claims that at the time he was taking himself "a bit too seriously." One day, after opening for Gyedu Blay Ambolley, "some Ghanaians in the crowd came to say, 'ah but you from the things you were saying on stage, rapping about chaskele and things that means you were a kubolor paa.'" The kubolor tag resonated with him in the same way Knaan (someone he knew personally and was a fan of) called himself "the dusty foot philosopher." Wanlov has a tendency to be creative with the naming of his children, the latest baby with a Japanese woman, Shokola. His fifth child was named Kojolescu Alata Mori.[59]"

Finch (2008) notes that "a changed name can be a symbol in a narrative of personal change" aimed at, for instance, repudiating the oppression associated with the former name (p.713). Thus, it is common to see U.S. African Americans change their names and adopt African names. Enslaved Africans brought to the new world were violently "renamed" revealing the symbolic as well as physical power of the slaver

[59] See "Strange names won't affect my kids - Wanlov the Kubolor." Retrieved from https://www.myjoyonline.com/entertainment/2014/March-4th/strange-names-wont-affect-my-kids-wanlov-the-kubolor.php. Wanlov explains: "1st name is a Ghana/Romania hybrid, 2nd name is to honour his Japanese grandfather + persecuted innocent gay Nigerians and last name is Yaa Ninja's (the baby's mother) last name … Domo Arigato.

masters. Here, the violent renaming of enslaved Africans (racialized as black) requires that we bear in mind Pilcher's (2016) call for an "embodied named identity." This notion seeks to render the "body visible in practices of naming and …making visible the connections between naming and the embodiment of identity" (p.776).

Ngugi (2009) has aptly noted that in Africa the European colonizers proceeded "to remake the land and its peoples in his image, the conqueror acquires and asserts the right to name the land and its subjects, demanding that the subjugated accept the names and culture of the conqueror" (p.9). This he argues allows Europe to plant their "memory on the bodies of the colonized" (p.9). Through this renaming, sometimes coerced, the colonized are deprived of their ability to remember because they have been "dismembered" from their memories.

After independence, Gold Coast was renamed Ghana after the historical empire that occupied parts of present-day Mali and Mauritania. Post-independence, Gold Coasters became known as Ghanaians. One of the chief architects of independence was Kwame Nkrumah, born Francis Nwia-Kofi Ngonloma. He changed his name around 1945 while in London for a conference on African freedom. In music, Omoniyi (2006) observes that Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, the Afrobeat music creator was an advocate of pan-Africanism. Fela, in line with reconciling his life and musical "philosophies, modified his Christian/English surname to become Ransome-Kuti in the 1970s" (p.203). This was his attempt to resist what he perceived to be the neocolonial character of post-independent Nigeria. Within the history of highlife in Ghana, name changes and appeals to local languages became vehicles to express an idea of authentic Africanness. Nkrumah even

wanted to indigenize the name of the genre, from highlife to ‘osibisaaba’ a Fante name for music (J. Collins 2010).

Language

For Wanlov, Akan and Ayat the creation of new identities accompanied an appeal for the usage of local languages and accents. With a population of almost 28 million the range of languages spoken in Ghana are estimated to be between 57 and 81 (Owu-Ewie 2017). English, the language of British colonization, is the official language of the land. For Ngugi (2009), language was the vehicle through which the colonizers “planted [their] memory on the mind” of the colonized (p.15). He argues that while Africans in the diaspora endured “linguicide”— “conscious acts of language liquidation”— Africans on the continent suffered “linguistic famine or linguifam” (p.17). Language liquidation was a deliberate approach to deny the enslaved their ability to use their language not only to communicate but reconnect to their African memory. This process, what Harold Cruse (1968) calls “deafricanization,” inaugurated the beginning of the process of “westernization” (p.52). Time and distance would later detach enslaved Africans from the cradle of their heritage.

Meanwhile in colonial Africa, Ngugi (2009) argues, “linguistic famine” lead to “linguistic deprivation and, ultimately, starvation” (p.18). I believe that artists adopting and using indigenous languages are involved in the rememory and expansion of local languages in Ghana. In other words, through hiplife, artists are both producing vocabularies that help make sense of the evolving socio-cultural landscape and maintaining connections to past histories. For instance, Ko-Jo Cue, a rapper, recalls:

> …there was a time in our rap culture where to be considered a dope MC by the masses you had to sound like Obrafuor. And all of us rapping, we would go and get Twi proverb books and put like a million Twi in there even if we didn't understand them.

One can only imagine what Obrafour singlehandedly did to engender a desire amongst budding rappers to draw on local Twi proverbs.

Within the linguistic history of hiphop in Africa, the first generation of rappers directly imitated U.S. African American English and accents of the U.S. hiphop songs they consumed. Further, they frequently resorted to references of U.S. American experience. This was, perhaps, partly driven by the idea that U.S. hiphop is the only true version of hiphop and other versions are inauthentic and derivative (Pennycock, 2007). Later, as hip hop became indigenized rappers adopted local languages and focused on themes about the realities of their societies and lived experience (Osumare 2012). However, in Ghana, years after the likes of Reggie Rockstone and the later Obrafour, whose proverb infused Twi lyrics became a source of new cool for young urbanized Ghanaians, the use of English and U.S. American accents persists. In fact, in Osumare's (2012) schematic of hiplife phases, the third phase (that starts from 2012) has ushered in a gradual return of the use of hiphop beats with English and little Twi, and offshoots such as Gh Rap have also emerged.

Similarly, Wanlov, Akan and Ayat started out using English, Wanlov and Ayat rapping in a U.S. African American accent. Ayat, as Billy Banger was rapping in English and Pidgin but recalls he was "faking" his "accent" not the "content." Later, he would "realize not to do the slangs thing" and use his regular accent and "more pidgin in there, more Twi, more Hausa …but the English was in there but like it made sense." However, Ayat notes, people often box him in by referring to him as the Hausa rapper.

The use of English within the hiplife community has been a marker demarcating class lines (Osumare 2012). This was evident in the recent beef between Sarkodie and Manifest. Sarkodie in his beef song against Manifest tells him to go and use his big English to Lecture in Legon (University of Ghana). Manifest comes from an elite family and has a masters while Sarkodie comes from a modest background. We must recall that the first generation of hiplifers— after the prominent pioneer Reggie Rockstone— emerged from some of the elite high schools. Also, recall that Rockstone was born in the UK and lived in the U.S.working on his music before he came to Accra. His success in Accra, he claims, can partly be attributed to the fact that he was regarded as an American who rapped in Twi.[60] Today, even as hiplife has been adopted by non-elite young urbanites, Shipley (2012) observes, "children of an urban cultural elite remained central to the genre's development" (p.202). In Ghana the more "authentic" form of hiphop/hiplife, often consumed by the young elites, is performed mainly in English with an emphasis placed on the lyrics and flow. The more dance music type which is favored by the "masses" is regarded, by the elites as, parochial (J. Collins 2007). As one of my informants, who raps mainly in English and associates with the more "hiphop" variety of hiplife, reminded me that he was not making music for the "masses," the "mechanics" and "hawkers." He was targeting the "more intellectual, or more learned or exposed crowd (cosmopolitan)." As such, what we see occurring here is reinforcement of class boundaries by appealing to the distinctions between the more English oriented hiplife favored by some urbanized elite youths and the dance music type of hiplife that is perceived to be favored by the "masses."

[60] See "Accra reclaims hip-hop." Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3241007.stm

Linguistically, English occupies a prominent place in Ghanaian society. In some instances, your proficiency is a shorthand for how smart you are perceived to be. The status of English as the official language of Ghana directly stems from British Colonialism's use of it as the "language of governance and power" (Boampong 2013, p.155). Additionally, earlier colonial assimilationist policies sought to create, amongst Gold Coasters, a class of "Black Englishmen" (Boampong 2013). According to Simpson (2008), as the official language of colonial governance, the small African population proficient in English became a class of local elites. Expertise in the colonial language were at times "jealously guarded by those who had obtained access to their learning" because the language came to be associated with prestige, education and wealth (Simpson, 2008, p.4). Conversely, indigenous languages largely remained limited within the so-called informal spaces and barely garnered the same social status "even where occurring as regional lingua francas among larger populations" (Simpson 2008, p.4).

Today, it is not uncommon to see signs in senior high schools that command, "Speak English Always." At my research presentation to the University of Massachusetts African Graduate Students Association, I shared an image of the sign, "Speak English Always," in Apam Senior High School. Tellingly, the other African graduate students recalled similar practices in their various countries. English appeared to be hierarchally positioned even in the art spaces I saw subverting Ghanaian respectability politics. I reflected on an incident at a Talk Party Session at Brazil House in an essay I wrote for Accra[dot]Alt:

> When an audience member prefaced his remarks by stating he would speak pidgin English, it was quickly pointed by multiple folks that he did not need our consent to express himself in the language he was most comfortable. In that moment, the

> domination of English within that space was contested. Indeed, we all confronted the contradiction: we usually talk to each other in pidgin but why did we feel the need to switch to English to ask questions in front of an audience? To be clear, these alternative ways of being may not necessarily be resistive to dominant social order, however they are indicative of the possibility for alternatives ways of being in the here and now. Which is, in fact, a necessary first step to imagining what could be possible in our society.[61]

In this subversive space, we often interacted informally in Pidgin (mostly amongst the men), yet when the space was organized for formal interaction we switched to English. This mirrored how the space was also ordered hierarchally with a separation between the speaker and audience. Incidentally, J. Collins (2004) points out the separation between audience and performer with a raised stage was introduced to Ghana via the Christian missionary "cantata" plays.

Specifically for Wanlov, Akan and Ayat language was not only crucial to their musical success but the articulation of their new performance personae. Wanlov recalls that while living in LA he begun reflecting on his identity and content during this period. He notes:

> I was rapping conscious lyrics in an African American accent or what I thought was one. And sometimes I would get off stage and some guys would come to me like chale, like … I really feel your lyrics. And I would be like 'oh thank you' [he said it in a thick Ghana accent] and they will look at me like ah. 'You sound different on stage, right now you have an African accent.' I'm like 'yeah, that's where I am from' and they were like 'oooh ok.'

From then on, Wanlov notes, "I just wanted to be myself so I just started writing. That's when I started writing 'Konkonsa.'"

Wanlov and Ayat engage in a lot code switching, using multiple languages in their songs, including English, pidgin, Twi, Ga and Hausa. They also reverted to their

[61] See "Sabolai Radio Sets: Ria Boss, Building Space and the Divine Feminine." Retrieved from http://accradotaltradio.com/2017/07/sabolai-sets-ria-boss-building-space-divine-feminine/

original Ghanaian accents to rap in English. On the other hand, Akan strictly employs Twi. His album, "Onipa Akuma" does not feature an English titled song. Commentators were quick to appreciate his depth and creative use Twi. Perhaps language appeals to creative range and relatability.[62] Akan told me that it is easier for him to express his thoughts in Twi. He has also noted that his language use is to educate. His insistence on Twi usage is easily delineated as growing up he spent the holidays with his maternal grandfather who was a linguist in a chief's palace. More importantly, for Akan, language became a way to tell people where he was from, this he noted, was important for him to "trace" his history because that is what shaped him. He was also deliberate with his name as to reflect and represent his Akan heritage. For the remainder of this chapter I want to dwell on the matter of authenticity that emerges in the examination.

Conclusion: "To be Myself"

As the above examination indicates, renaming, local language and accent use, and bodily presentation advance the notion of authenticity as the central mechanism for reinvention through the creation of a new performance persona. In many ways, these artists practice decolonial creativity by granting themselves permission to be themselves. This is what Mignolo (2013) calls "border thinking," an act of "delinking" which involves the rejection of modern racial construction of black inferiority. For instance, Wanlov demonstrates knowing through the senses by walking barefoot to get the "touch memories" of the places he visits. Walking barefoot is also a practice of Ga indigenous priests/priestess. To this end, these artists move towards what Mignolo calls "decolonial

[62] In my discussion with John Collins, he told me about the inherent tones within languages and how they relate to music. It appears that since these Ghanaian rappers usually have mastery over the tonality of their indigenous languages they are able to flow well on local instrumentation.

healing,[63]" a process of "regaining your pride, your dignity, assuming your entire humanity in front of an un-human being that makes you believe you were abnormal, lesser, that you lack something" (Gaztambide-Fernández 2014, p.207).

Being "authentic," which became a cornerstone of the decolonial healing project, lead to the path of their "freedom," where their goal was not to be the perfect imitation but to become their best selves. The turn away from imitation, I believe, freed up creative space that could be channeled towards more original ends, such as experimenting with their histories and bodies.[64] For a moment, consider how the naming of the genre hiplife legitimated the various experimentations with indigenous languages and instrumentations. The objective of this unique Ghanaian hybrid was not necessarily to directly imitate U.S. hiphop. Indeed, just as hiphop in the U.S. became a way to articulate marginalized experience of Black and Latino urban youth, its praxis in Ghana became a vehicle to also articulate the experiences of its practitioners. It is unsurprising then that Akan's album "Onipa Akuma," has been praised for its creativity not just with language but with storytelling. For these artists, it was in their performance persona that they sought to reclaim their experiences and bodies as resources for creative expression.

Concerns over the issue of originality were a recurring theme during my research work in Ghana. Various cultural producers complained about what seemed to be the imitation of U.S .popular culture. Indeed, some of them would invoke the phrase "we need to sell our culture." Yet, often, the target consumer was the figure of the

[63] The concept of healing Mignolo borrows from indigenous thinkers and does of African and Afro-Caribbean ways of knowing and understanding.
[64] I am grateful to Sionne Neely for this. In her performance at Brazil House she reminded me of how the body is an "archive."

"foreigner," and the "outsider." Their critique appeared to argue that imitation lead to, what Taylor (2016) calls black invisibility while authenticity produced visibility. Yet, their call for authenticity seemed to call for performing for the "whitely gaze." The inherent logic within these ideas was that since indigenous forms have been so undervalued within the eyes of local people, foreign appreciation will somehow engender local acceptance and appreciation. The notion of "sell our culture" appears to advocate for originality; not to produce new stories or identities (read decolonial) but objects to be consumed by the 'West.' Similar to what Karin Barber (1987) called tourist arts, those produced by locals to be consumed by outsiders.

The cultural producers who invoked the phrase, "sell our culture" typically admonished the tendency to simply copy the 'West' but seem to center the imperial gaze. Thus, the call for originality is typically aimed at producing something 'westerners' will admire and not something aimed at Ghanaians. Originality became associated with the strategies to attain international success, western validation as a mark of authenticity. I recall Sarkodie, in his bid to go international (read West), explain that when his videos are playing on BBC a "white person might even look at it and say this is a nice video." Taylor (2016) points out the history of black aesthetic practice reveals "themes of racial vindication and Eurocentric civilizationism" (p.14). From the "late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth, African-descended people used performances and aesthetic objects in European styles and settings not to just to make meaning, but also to demonstrate to a skeptical world their capacity for culture and hence, for civilization" (Taylor 2016, p.14). Recall, for diasporic Africans, black cultural workers symbolized their capacity of human possibilities. In many ways, I believe this idea of "selling our culture" is still lodged in

this tradition of racial vindication. Yet, I would argue that the primary aim for investing in Ghanaian cultural production is to enable us tell our own stories. These stories, created for and directed at us, will open the possibilities for healing colonial wounds and further the mission to develop a sense of self beyond the gaze of the "West."

Of course, economic motives appear to undergird the sell-our-culture thinking. J. Collins (2005) notes that older artists like Rex Omar and Nat Brew for instance, would shift "from local techno-pop by infusing their music with local rhythms and melodies, and using real drummers and horn players in their highlife performances and recordings" (p.134). This was an attempt, as he observes, to enter the world music market since it was perceived that those in the west wanted to listen to what they thought was "more 'authentic' African music." However, those sounds were actually an older genre of popular African music typically played with a live band to a dancing audience in the night clubs. Other performers have adopted "these two marketing profiles." For instance, the well-known famous Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour does two types of stage performances, one in which he sings with drum-machines and synthesizers for his home market and then for the 'world music' international market he sings with local drums and full horn sexton (J. Collins, 2005, p.134). According to J. Collins (2005) the recognition and appreciation of the 'world music' marketplace for live African popular performances may have also precipitated "re-Africanisation" of local music in the age of Ghanaian techno-pop infused music. Thompson (2008) also demonstrates how X Plastaz, a Tanzanian rap group, together with their Dutch manager, draws on Maasai clothing, hairstyles and indigenous chants to appeal to the "touristic desires of Western audiences" yet in "local-oriented materials and private interviews" they distance themselves from

the label Maasai (p.37). In this way they have been able to attain international success that they use to project themselves as popular internationally within their Tanzanian home even though their music may not be as popular.

Another way the move towards authenticity emerges is when Ghanaian artists get to spend some time outside the country. In my discussion with the writer, Nii Ayikwei Parkes (short-listed for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 2010), who schooled in the UK, he reminds me that

> …sometimes being elsewhere can also help bring into focus the things that make you unique. Sometimes when you are home you don't actually realize the value of your own culture ...sometimes you have to be outside to realize the value of your own culture and for it to really start to reflect in the work in a more conscious way.

This is certainly the case for Wanlov who was reminded by an audience member, after a show, that his Ghanaian accent could also be appealing. When I spoke to the artist Papachi, who had worked in Qatar, he claims his appreciation for Ghanaian culture was prompted by his experience abroad. He notes:

> I started seeing everything clear, as in how these foreign people appreciate local things, original things, African culture. That is where I started seeing these things. Cos one day I had this African print on and I realized that certain foreign people were just looking at me because of what I was wearing, they were interested in it, some of them approached me and started taking pictures ...just because of what I was wearing

Papachi later went to Dubai and had a similar experience. Upon returning to Ghana he decided to change his music, he wanted to ensure that all the things he did "from now on has an African element" in it. Yet he still used English alongside "Twi, Fante, Pidgin and Nzema." J. Collins (2005) also notes how the famous Ghanaian drummer, "Guy Warren, who was originally the drummer of the Tempos highlife band, …moved to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s to play jazz" (p.129). Not only did Warren introduce

African influences into jazz but he returned to the use of local Ghanaian drums and renamed himself Kofi Ghanaba (son of Ghana). In these instances, as it were, recognition of Ghanaianess is observed in unGhanaian spaces which prompts a return/rediscovery to self which then becomes a fertile ground for original creative expression.

In my interviews, the Nigerian music industry was invoked by cultural producers as an example of African artists "doing cultural authenticity right." Their arguments largely revolved around the level of international success that some Nigerian artists (Davido and Wizkid) had attained from this strategy. Akan complained that Ghanaian videos lacked a sense of Ghanaianess, as it were, compared to the way Nigeria videos featured elements from their culture. He cited Davido's video, "Fans Mi" (2015) featuring U.S. rapper, Meek Mill where Davido eats a local Nigerian dish against the backdrop of its North American set location.

Often, concerns about being authentic seemed to lack the ability to escape the gaze of the "west." This brings to mind W.E.B Du Bois's idea of 'double-consciousness' in his discussion of black experience in the US. He argued that U.S. African Americans are

> gifted with second-sight in this American world, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. (cited in Taylor 2016, p. 38).

Similarly, Frantz Fanon's notion of sociogenesis captures the experience of the racialized subject under the White gaze of the modern/colonial project. Likewise, so-called developing countries and their citizens exist under the colonizing gaze of development discourse. Indeed, as noted, Arturo Escobar argues that development

discourse has become an important instrument that has not only been used to produce our world but also how we have produced ourselves. This has resulted in the constricting or obstructing of alternative imaginaries.

Again, the author Nii Ayikwei Parkes offers a useful way to think about artistic authenticity. It is worth quoting at length here:

> …the moment you start to talk about authenticity you have to generalize and … as much as I believe in our community spirit, I also believe in individualism. Amongst the Ga…, the person who outdoors you, you are supposed to take his characteristics. So that is an admission that as much as we are a community there are individual traits because otherwise anybody could outdoor[65] you, right? So you have to understand that even within our own construct, which is a community based construct, there is the space for individuality and that space for individuality then says that authenticity is also individual. So there are elements of authenticity that are communal and elements that are individual but the very fact that there are elements that are individual means that the only person who can truly comment on the authenticity of their actions is the individual undertaking those actions. Yes, we can observe from the outside the discomfort or we can observe that somebody is playing a role. Just by observing them and seeing how at ease they are within that role. Like, if somebody is not comfortable within the skin that they are presenting to the world we can see it. We can question them and they may deny it, when they deny it there is nothing we can do. We can just say reflect on it. If they don't deny then you can then start to have this talk about authenticity.

To begin, this notion of the authentic as being true to oneself is productive. As Charles Taylor (1992) points out: "Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own" (p.29). Yet as Parkes argues, the legibility of authentic performances are subject to the viewers/listeners who measure whether it reflects the performer's real personal identity. According to him, outsiders can then discern an inauthentic performance from the discomfort it elicits. For

[65] A traditional ceremony in which the child is officially named.

instance, the use of palpably fake UK or U.S. American English accents or what is commonly referred to as LAFA (locally acquired foreign accents).

I also recall an incident while observing a hiplife music video shoot on a hot (about 88 degrees Fahrenheit) Sunday in Tema. It was an outdoor shoot set on a community basketball court. The artist was in a jacket and would later say that the "abrokyire" (Western) life would kill us as he took jacket off due to profuse sweating. The dress codes of U.S. hip hop are partly borne out of specific geographic weather conditions yet they are sometimes worn in the blazing hot temperatures of Ghana. Even US prison aesthetic has made an appearance in a hiplife video. Sarkodie's "Trumpet" (2016) video featuring other artists depicts Pappy Kojo in handcuffs wearing an orange prison uniform. I believe it is this type of spectacle and resulting audience discomfort that reveals when the pursuit of perfect imitation supersedes the desire for original creative expression.

The idea of authenticity as a space of comfort also brings to mind Akan's comment on exhaustion, Wanlov's reference to "just wanting to be himself," and Ayat's switch to being "true" to himself. Akan's feeling of exhaustion captures the problem that arises when the imitation performance persona is disconnected from their lived experience. Yet, his retreat to authenticity was also prompted by the sense of personal responsibility to his community.

Further, the issue of being comfortable with one's performance persona is illustrated here in the figure of the akorabone. Authenticity partly arises out of non-conformity to social expectations and norms. Now, what does a decolonial "worldsense" mean in a society like Ghana which has yet to fully confront the source of its wounds—

coloniality. To be sure, the articulation of a decolonial aesthesis offers, through hiplife music and culture, a possible path to relative freedom for creative originality. The "decolonial option" creates the grounds for cultural liberation from the conditions of coloniality and its devaluation of black life and cultural practices.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: DESIRING DEVELOPMENT

One of the last people I interviewed during my 2017-2018 research in Ghana was Benard Avle, the host of the popular Citi Breakfast Show (Citi CBS) and the 2018 Journalist of the Year at the Ghana Journalist Association Awards. Development is a prominent theme on Citi CBS.[66] Indeed, they once hosted Ha-Joon Chang (2002) who is well-known for his work on the history of how advanced industrial countries 'developed.' In my interview, I asked Bernard how he understood development, he stated:

> Development is improved lives for people to achieve their dreams...So a society where people's lives doesn't progressively improve is not developed. A society where peoples aspirations are not met is not developed. A society where people don't have access to basic necessities and amenities is not developed…So development for us is improved lives where people are happy. So that's it because I don't have an academic definition, but anything that would improve lives of people is development.

When I asked Bernard what he thought were the challenges we faced as nation he divided them into two main categories. He stated, "I think we have hardware and software challenges." For him, the hardware denoted "infrastructural things" such as inadequate and underresourced "hospitals," "clinics," and so on. "The other one is software" he stated, "mindset, behavior, thinking." He suggests, that "the reason why we don't have enough of the hardware is because the software is faulty. So where radio comes in, is to try and reconfigure the software. When the software is right the hardware will follow."

Bernard's exposition broadly captures how most cultural producers I talked to frame the causes of Ghana's problems. In terms of the "hardware," they pointed to the

[66] Development journalism remains a prominent feature in Ghanaian media. Journalists regard development as a primary national objective and media as a necessary tool to support this endeavor.

lack of basic amenities (from education to healthcare) and poor sanitation. Consistently, they argued that Ghana's problems were due to the attitudes, and by extension the mindsets, of Ghanaians. The director, Fofo Gavua, stated, "from my perspective, the primary problem with Ghanaians as a country is our consciousness, how our mentality, psychology as a people." For him a black inferiority complex was our central problem. On the other hand, others claimed that attitudinal problems such as laziness, indiscipline and dishonesty (corruption) primarily by our leaders but also everyday people. The multimedia artist, Alex Wondergem offers some insight into this. For instance, he suggests that Accra, the capital city, has put everybody in survival mode and "that creates a different type of human being." One in which people are "just thinking about survival survival survival." These conditions then turn us virtually into "cattle" he argues, "then we become like animals. Then we start killing people. Then we start doing like shifty things and its already happening…"

Largely, the challenges my co-participants discussed were internal to the nation of Ghana. With very few exceptions, there was very little consideration for the global dynamics of the Ghanaian condition. Pan-African Feminist, writer, dramatist and broadcaster, Akosua Hanson argued, "…we're neocolonial slaves, we're still very mentally enslaved. I feel like that would be the root to everything else: corruption, patriarchy, all of it. We're mentally enslaved." Nigerian Afrofusion artist Villy suggested that Africa needs unification, he argued, it is "not a country problem but a continental problem." He appeared to be invoking Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, who famously stated in his Ghanaian independence speech that "our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa." Unsurprisingly,

some of my co-participants returned to Nkrumah to claim that our current state is due to the unfinished project of decolonization. The poet, Kwame Write notes,

> the whole world was looking at Ghana in 1957 … we had all these policies and all these ideas to have a whole revolution and a whole system which sustained itself but as Nkrumah said, one country can't stand on its own especially in Africa." Tandon (2015) argues, "resistance against imperial domination is the first law of motion of development. (p.158)

The lack of a critique of imperialism is telling as it reveals how the problem of development is understood primarily as an internal process within the nation-state.

In returning to Bernard, on his morning breakfast radio in March of this year, who reflected on his trip around the country and the poverty he encountered in some of the rural communities he visited. He concluded his discussion stating:

> ... I want to repeat that our economic model is making more and more people poor. A lot of people are cut of from the system we've created here in Accra and Kumasi, and we need to do something about that...A lot of people have not benefited from the so-called development that we claim to have created...

His co-host, Godfred Akoto Boateng, also chimed in:

> A lot of the time you hear, interesting data like, 'oh we've extended electricity to x percentage of the country, internet penetration is at x, water access is at x.' And then you go on the road and actually ask yourself, what exactly is development? When you see some of the things you see.

These two broadcasters have interviewed some of the most important figures of Ghanaian political and economic life about the nature and character of country's development. Their perceptive reflections above pointedly express what is at stake in this conversation of development in Ghana, and Africa for that matter. For instance, in policy, development discourse potentially defines how and where resources are allocated. More importantly, it is also used to build consensus for supporting neoliberal interventions in Ghana.

These are the pressing issues that this project broadly speaks to. In April 9-18, 2018, Philip Alston visited Ghana to study the government's attempt to "address poverty through the lens of international human rights law." His report notes that while Ghana is on the path to becoming Africa's fastest-growing economy in 2018, the benefits of this growth have mainly gone to the wealthy. As the report declared, "[i]nequality is higher than it has ever been in Ghana." Further, the report points to Ghana's own account of poverty which indicates that one out of every five people lives in poverty and one out of eight live in extreme poverty. To be deemed poor in Ghana means that one's income is less than Ghs 1,314 per adult per year (estimated at US$1.83 per day in 2013, at the time the survey was conducted, yet it was 80 cents in April 2018). The income of the extreme poor is less than Ghs 792 per adult per year (US$1.10 per day, in 2013, and 48 cents in April 2018). In addition, Oxfam has been talking about the rising levels of global inequality. It pointed out that the wealth of the richest 1% has been on the increase since the 2008 financial crises. In fact, by 2016, and for the first time, they owned more of the world's wealth than the rest of the world's population combined (Hickel, 2017). The narratives of development purport to provide answers to these challenges of poverty and global inequality.

To this end, this project has examined the cultural politics surrounding development discourse. Specifically, this project understands culture, following Hall's (1996) Gramscian elaboration that there is an important connection between culture and politics; the connection is complex and not "mechanical." As such, the various dimensions of culture need to be analyzed in relationship to how they reproduce and sustain dominant ideologies. Hall asks that we move away from an economic

reductionism which limits how we can think about the ideological and political aspects (as well as class, gender and race) within a particular social formation in a specific epoch (Hall 1996, p.418). In this way, as Hall argues, culture is 'constitutive of society' with its own determining force that cannot be merely reduced to a reflection of the economic level. To be sure, then the meaning and purpose of cultural production is not given or guaranteed by the economic level. As such, this makes this a space for cultural intervention. Examining cultural institutions and producers gives us insight into how many wills and motives are forged together to operate in a single manner founded on an "equal and common" understanding of the world (p.196). My work, drawing on critical cultural studies of a decolonial orientation, has been interested in how the hegemonic consensus of development discourse is (re)constituted in the vibrant and prominent arena of hiplife.

Yet, Hall (1996) has reminded us that there are economic constraints "on the categories in which circuits of production are thought" (p.44). For instance, the economic can provide a stock of references which will be utilized in "thought" (p.44). However, it cannot provide the ideas of specific groups in specific periods. In addition, it cannot predict which ideas will be used by which groups. Thus, bringing us to considering "determination" as laying the foundations and setting the "limits of the terrain of operations" in terms of "thoughts" (p.44). More importantly, however, it cannot guarantee in any fixed determined way the outcomes of political struggles (Hall 1986).

As such, in examining popular culture, I recognize that the political stakes reside in the notion that it is a site where the antagonisms between the dominant and subordinate groups manifest. Popular culture does not operate outside the force of cultural relations

and power. As Hall (1986) noted, it is a “battlefield where no once-for-all victories are obtained but where there are always strategic positions to be won and lost” (p.187). In this way, hiplife does not represent total opposition or incorporation into the dominant ideologies of the day. Thus, I take these systems of representation as potential sites of constitution and political possibility. Above all I understand that popular culture is one of the sites hegemony is often produced and cemented. As Hall (1986) aptly notes, contestation in modern politics is displaced across a myriad of sites of political and social antagonisms.

It is in this direction that I have examined the operation of development discourse in popular culture, how it is (re)produced, contested and which alternatives are imagined. How development works within and as part of the “ideological complex.” Ideologies have material force because they appear in social practice. In Hall’s (1985) Althusserian reading he notes that “there is no social practice outside ideology” (p.103). However, he adds, “[it] does not follow that because all practices are in ideology or inscribed by ideology all practices are nothing but ideology” (p.103).

Development ideologies are implicated in notions of identity, place, and social formation. Within the couplet, developed/underdeveloped, the latter's 'chain of connotations' include, backwardness, blackness, corruption, poverty, Third World, which were inaugurated in particular historical moments. (Presently, with the rise of Charismatic Christianization, notions of paganism and problematic theological doctrines like the curse of Ham reinscribe blackness with racist ideas of backwardness). Yet, hiplife, as site of struggle, has the potential to disarticulate and rearticulate

underdeveloped to another chain of connotations that amplify coloniality and expose the imperialists' exploitation of global capitalism. As Hall (1985) notes:

> A particular ideological chain becomes a site of struggle, not only when people try to displace, rupture or contest it by supplanting it with some wholly new alternative set of terms, but also when they interrupt the ideological field and try to transform its meaning by chaining or re-articulating its associations, for example from the negative to the positive (p.112).

With this insight, the study has also sought to reveal potential cultural strategies for rearticulating development discourse to a progressive project of liberation (chapter 5), to invest new progressive meaning into ideas about development since they are not guaranteed for all time. For it is also on the terrain of popular culture that we can also locate nascent potentialities. Hiplife has become an important vehicle of youth agency. As young people's lived experiences are retold in the songs, videos and material culture they become constant reminders of the failings of the neoliberal project in Ghana. The marginalized youth draw on this popular cultural medium of hiplife to speak and to demand to be heard. This cultural agency reclaims and produces space— physically, psychologically, socially etc. (chapter 2). In the process, the immense transformative energies of young peoples are mobilized to produce a space of contestation over meanings; including, how and what it means to successfully navigate a space defined as underdeveloped. In other words, it creates space for political intervention that may enable the shifting of the dispositions of power because it presents new possibilities. It becomes a site to constitute a popular force (chapter 5) and a site that may, and I trust will, enable us address what we might become.

Beyond the cultural and political dimensions that have underpinned this project, my study complements existing work in hiplife and audio-visual studies in general. In

this current post-televisual stage of audiovisual studies music videos in Africa continue to be underexamined with few recent exceptions (Ekdale, 2017 & Dokotum, 2016). In addition, hiplife studies have largely ignored the wealth of knowledge that can be gleaned from hiplife music videos; even as hiphop and its localized presence across African countries draws heavily on the visual. For instance, artists strive to create images of success through visual forms of self-representation such as dress, photography and importantly music videos. I have argued that the image of success, mediated through conspicuous consumption, is largely connected to musical talent.

In this project, I have also argued that existing music video studies have not sufficiently theorized the production set. Music video studies have largely focused on textual analysis and some have examined the cultural workers involved in the production process (Banks, 1996; Fitts, 2008; Ekdale, 2017). However, I have demonstrated that the production set is important to consider in order to fully theorize hiplife music and culture. The production set reveals how creative collaboration is vital to the development of music videos.

This project also contributes to communication studies by centering coloniality as the experience of living in a space defined as underdeveloped. I make interconnections between the history of colonialism and the continuing global power relations that it inaugurated. In fact, coloniality offers understanding into sedimentation of colonialist ideas and practices which persist today. These sediments continue to shape the field of relations and power in which popular cultural forms like hiplife operate. In the concluding section, I want to briefly return to the enduring question of why the desire for development persists.

Post-Development and the Desire to Develop

In the quest to go on 'theorizing,' this project drew on post-development approach. As noted, one of the critiques against post-development is that it does not adequately theorize what De Vries (2007) describes as the "unfailing belief in development." In other words, why the desire for development persists regardless of how many times it has failed to significantly improve the lives of those in Ghana, and Africa more generally (Mathews, 2017; Ferguson 2006). Developmentality –derived from the Foucauldian notion of governmentality— has been used to understand how everyday life is governed by discourses of development (Lie 2015; Ove 2013). In this way, power is understood to work through people's freedoms, and as such is not regarded as repressive. This is because, Ove (2013) notes, in Foucault's formulation "power represents the ability of individuals to choose and to act on those choices" (p.313).

Moore (1999) also argues that post-development perspectives tend to offer a deterministic conception of development discourse. For him global development discourses "are refracted, reworked, and sometimes subverted in particular localities" (p.655). As such, development's disciplinary effects "confront not docile bodies but the situated cultural practices and sedimented histories of people and place" (658). Inspired by Hall's Gramscian reading, Moore suggests that rather than viewing development as a "machine that secures fixed and determined outcomes" it should be conceptualized as a terrain of struggle defined by local histories and practices (p.656). Drawing on the metaphor of crucible instead of machine (Ferguson's anti-politics machine), Moore regards "development politics as a complex articulation whose outcomes are not guaranteed or foreclosed but are rather historically contingent" (p.674).

However, De Vries (2007) adopts another approach purposefully distancing himself from the post-development governmentality approach. He draws on Lacan and Deleuze to contend that "the desire for development fills the gap between the promises and their meagre actual realizations, thus giving body to a desiring machine that also operates in between the generation and banalization of hope" (p.30). Thus he calls for an understanding of the development apparatus as also a "desiring machine" that produces a desiring subject who seeks out "what is in development more than itself; in other words for the 'promise of development'" (p.33). For him, the aim of development is not in the actualization but its ability to sustain the "capacity to desire a different kind of society that is not yet defined" (p.26).

I have seriously engaged with his argument that we must investigate the promises of development. Yet, what De Vries (2007) describes as the "unfailing belief in development" is people's "good sense" of the unjust exploitative social arrangement that produces the inequalities people in the global south live through (p.26). What this formulation and other critiques do not sufficiently examine is how developmentalist ideas enter the common sense of those living in "underdeveloped" spaces. The precise spheres where the fragments of this development discourse are articulated, reworked and circulated, particularly its promises which sustain people's investments in the development. With this project, I argue that it is in the arena of popular culture that these promises are magnified and held out as possible realities for all. These promises mobilize the interests of varied groups within the social formation. Who does not want good healthcare, good roads and transportation? In Dyer's (2002) work on entertainment and utopianism, he argues that popular images are not meant to be models of a utopian world;

rather they serve as representations of the possibility of utopia. In this way images of success (the good life), often images associated with westernization, represent what a developed Ghana can look like

Why do most people primarily look to Europe and North America as models of what is developed? How are these ideas circulated? In other words, how do they enter the common sense of the people? It goes without saying that Ghanaians do not want to live a life of impoverishment (magnified by global inequality) and they desire to overcome poverty and enjoy basic amenities. The promise of development is the goodies that will come from "development as a path" to actualization. Thus, there is a distinction between desiring the promises of development and development process itself (De Vries, 2007). In other words, the desire for bridges, roads, potable drinking water and other basic amenities is not the same as the desire for privatization, deregulation and neoliberal policy.

Towards that end, I have argued in this project that one of the areas where development discourses are evident in Ghana is hiplife music videos and culture. Hall (1996) reminds us, through his Gramscian understanding that, ideas do not "[move] and ideologies develop spontaneously and without direction" (p.432). In this way, hiplife has become one of the sites where the imagination is engaged over the meaning and construction of development. It is where development discourse continuously attempts to fix a particular narrative about 'the west and rest.' In other words, where the discourse of development attempts to settle how we should think about addressing global inequality. Indeed, it is the latest modality— historically salvationist narratives of civilizing missions— through which global inequalities are represented. As Makki (2004) points

out, the opposition, civilized versus primitive, which was fundamental to justifying colonialism became untenable. Following decolonization, development became integral to "reconfiguring the global identity of ex-colonies in a way that was incorporative and universalistic yet still hierarchical" (Makki, 2004, p.155). In a way, development discourse has come to replace anti-colonial discourses as it obscures the exploitative and unequal global relations that maintain Africa's so-called underdevelopment and coloniality.

In many ways, the discourse on development also attempts to efface the neo-colonial relations that continue to produce coloniality in the global south. National aspirations, sustained by the promises of development, are mobilized in support of a depoliticized and re-branded capitalist system. In this way, development becomes hollow; devoid of any conception of justice or true liberation. Recall strategies such as "coups, structural adjustment, free trade, investor disputes are all ways that rich countries and powerful corporations have sought to secure their economic interest on the world stage" (Hickel, 2017 p.207). As such, this discourse erases the relational nature of Africa's so-called underdevelopment by locating its problems primarily within the boundaries of their nation-states.

To be sure, development discourse, particularly through the prominent but discredited modernization theory, activates sediments of colonialist ideas about white superiority, and the racist conceptualizations of black inferiority it rests on. Development speaks to the unhealed wounds of colonial domination and exploitation, and contemporary Western imperialism. Recall that colonialism transformed African societies in major socio-cultural and economic ways. It unequally integrated African societies in

the global capitalist economy. The Guyanese scholar, Walter Rodney argued in "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" (1972) that underdevelopment is a product of a "capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation" (p.22). Yet, captured in the often recited phrase in Ghana, 'what is wrong with the black man' are racist notions of the lazy uncivilized black man (always gendered in this way) incapable of improving himself and productively utilizing his resources for his benefit. As I have shown, one of the root causes of Ghana's problems, alleged by my co-participants, is attitudes. This is a pervasive notion as evidenced by a recent opinion piece in the Daily Graphic in which the writer argues "The Ghanaian problem is simply a problem of character! You can't have an American dream with a Ghanaian attitude."[67]

Hall (1988) reminds us that the function of "what Gramsci called an organic (i.e., historically effective) ideology is that it articulates into a configuration different subjects, different identities, different projects, different aspirations. It does not reflect; it constructs a 'unity' out of difference (p.166). Within a Gramscian framework, everyday consciousness, that is "common sense," is characterized by its incoherence, fragmentation and contradiction. It is constituted by sediments of a clearer coherent philosophical system (read: development discourse) which have been layered over a period without a "clear inventory" (Hall 1996 p.431). Common sense is significant precisely because it remains the site where "conceptions and categories of practical consciousness of the masses" are made (Hall, 1996, p.431). According to Hall this "taken for granted" terrain needs to be overcome just as it must be contested and transformed if

[67] See "The Ghanaian problem is a character problem!". Retrieved from https://www.graphic.com.gh/features/features/the-ghanaian-problem-is-a-character-problem.html

new conceptions are to take root (p.431). Hall notes that politics functions to relate common sense and philosophy. The prominent agencies that perform this task include, educational, cultural, the family and religious institutions (Hall 1996, p.432). Yet, as Hall notes, for Gramsci there is "never any one, single, unified and coherent 'dominant ideology' which pervades" (p.433). Indeed, within this conception several philosophical systems exist together. This he describes as the "an ideological complex, ensemble or discursive formation" (p.434).

As noted above, what has not been sufficiently examined within post-development theory is how development circulates and enters everyday consciousness. In examining its operation in popular culture my project offers some direction about how it circulates through ideas of success that dominate mainstream hiplife music videos. As I demonstrate in chapter three, hiplife is a key site where common sense ideas of about what it means to live a modern life are circulated. As such, I have argued that mainstream hiplife musicians like Sarkodie construct an entrepreneurial branded self as way to access the good life. Their performances of success are associated with aspirations to exit conditions of impoverishment and backwardness which have been linked to underdevelopment. Yet, this notion of success is gendered and constructed through the conspicuous consumption of cars, houses and the display of women with normative beauty standards like light skin. These elements are articulated together to create the brand and imbue it with values that echo the imperatives of the society. In addition, economic well-being is also a sign of good citizenship and moral adulthood.

However, the notion of improving one's self through enterprise constructs citizens as neoliberal agents who are supposed to seek their economic wellbeing through the free

market. I have argued that the visible display of material wealth operates in a manner that serves as a counter-narrative of Africa as a place of negation. The famed Nigerian Novelist, Chinua Achebe, put it best when he said, there is a desire "in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil in Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (Achebe, 1977, p.783). These positive depictions may offer aesthetics and performances that project imaginaries of a 'developed' society. Yet, they also reinscribe Ghana as an underdeveloped space, that is, within the current framework of development discourse. However, some audiences resist these narratives as inauthentic because, they claim, the artists do not live these lives. There exists an expectation that the art must reflect the "real" or "imagined" lived experiences of the artists.

To be sure, there are complex understandings about Ghana as underdeveloped and what it means to be developed. Within these spaces of contested meanings are the grounds for a politics of possibility for hiplife to produce alternative imaginaries for social transformation. In other words, an attempt to not use hiplife simply to produce Ghanaian versions of Western things. Or, to follow the oft cited affirmation in Ghana: we too can do it, which implies setting the limits of creative expression within the boundaries of 'Western' standards. As I have argued in chapter five, hiplife is a ground of possibility that can be mobilized to move young Ghanaians towards a decolonial consciousness. For those navigating conditions of coloniality, the quest for understanding our so-called underdevelopment must not be limited to what happens within our national boundaries. For this reason, a conscious understanding of how imperialism continues to shape our understanding of ourselves and our society is needed. Importantly, this will enable us to

begin to trace the contours of our exploitation and offer the possibilities for constructing a society that places what Fanon called the wretched of the earth at the center.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Achebe, C. (1977). An image of Africa. The Massachusetts Review, 782-794.

Agawu, K. (2016). Tonality as a Colonizing Force in Africa. In Radano, R., & Olaniyan, T. (Eds.), Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique, (pp. 334-56). Duke University Press.

Agovi, K. (1995). A king is not above insult: The politics of good governance in Nzema avudwene festival songs. Power, marginality and African oral literature, 47-64.

Aidoo, A.A. (1993). The African Woman Today. Dissent. 319-325

Alexander, B. K. (2011). Standing in the wake: A critical auto/ethnographic exercise on reflexivity in three movements. Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies, 11(2), 98-107.

Allman, J. M. (2004). "Let Your Fashion Be in Line with Our Ghanaian Costume": Nation, Gender, and the Politics of Clothing in Nkrumah's Ghana in Fashioning Africa. [electronic resource]: power and the politics of dress. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c2004.

Amoakohene, M. I. (2004). Violence against women in Ghana: a look at women's perceptions and review of policy and social responses. Social Science & Medicine, 59(11), 2373-2385.

Ampofo, A. A., & Asiedu, A. M. (2012). Changing representations of women in Ghanaian popular music: Marrying research and advocacy. Current Sociology, 60(2), 258-279.

Asad, T. (1992). Conscripts of western civilization. Dialectical anthropology: Essays in honor of Stanley Diamond, 1, 333-51

Asante, G. (2016). Glocalized whiteness: Sustaining and reproducing whiteness through "skin toning" in post-colonial Ghana. Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 9(2), 87-103.

Askew, K. M. (2009). Musical images and imaginations: Tanzanian music videos. Media and Identity in Africa, 208-217.

Aubrey, J. S., & Frisby, C. M. (2011). Sexual objectification in music videos: A content analysis comparing gender and genre. Mass Communication and Society, 14(4), 475-501

Aufderheide, P. (1986). Music videos: The look of the sound. Journal of Communication, 36(1), 57-78.

Auslander, P. (2004). Performance analysis and popular music: A manifesto. Contemporary Theatre Review, 14(1), 1-13.

Banet-Weiser, S. (2012). AuthenticTM: The politics of ambivalence in a brand culture. New York, NY: NYU press.

Banet-Weiser, S. (2015). Keynote address: Media, markets, gender: Economies of visibility in a neoliberal moment. The Communication Review, 18(1), 53-70.

Barber, K. (1987). Popular arts in Africa. African Studies Review, 30(3), 1-78.

_____. (2013). Foreword in Newell, S., & Okome. Popular culture in Africa: the episteme of the everyday (Vol. 58). New York, NY: Routledge.

Bechky, B. A. (2006). Gaffers, gofers, and grips: Role-based coordination in temporary organizations. Organization science, 17(1), 3-21.

Billett, S. (2001). Knowing in practice: Re-conceptualising vocational expertise. Learning and instruction, 11(6), 431-452.

Blay, Y. A. (2007). Yellow fever: Skin bleaching and the politics of skin color in Ghana. Temple University.

Blay, Y. A. (2010). Ahoofe kasa!: Skin bleaching and the function of beauty among Ghanaian women. Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies, (14).

Bloom, P. J., Miescher, S., & Manuh, T. (Eds.). (2014). Modernization as spectacle in Africa. Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press.

Boampong, C. A. (2013). Rethinking British colonial policy in the Gold Coast: the language factor. Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, (15), 137-157.

Bradley, A. (2017). Book of rhymes: The poetics of hip hop. New York, NY: Civitas Books.

Brigg, M. (2002). Post-development, Foucault and the colonisation metaphor. Third World Quarterly, 23(3), 421-436.Collins (2003), Ghanaian women enter into popular entertainment

Cantalupo, N., Martin, L. V., Pak, K., & Shin, S. (2006). Domestic violence in Ghana: The open secret. Geo. J. Gender & L., 7, 531.

Chang, H. J. (2002). Kicking away the ladder: development strategy in historical perspective. London, U.K.: Anthem Press.

Chalfin, B. (2010). Neoliberal frontiers: An ethnography of sovereignty in West Africa. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Charry, E. (2012). A Capsule History of African Rap. In Charry (Ed), Music for an African Twenty-First Century. Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World (pp 1-28). Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press

Chikowero, M. (2014). Is propaganda modernity? Press and radio for 'Africans' in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi during World War II and its aftermath. In Bloom, P. J., Miescher, S., & Manuh, T. (Eds.), Modernization as spectacle in Africa, 112-35. Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press.

Clark, M. K. (2018). Hip-hop in Africa: Prophets of the City and Dustyfoot Philosophers. Athens, Oh: Ohio University Press.

Clark, M. K., & Mwanzia Koster, M. (2014). Hip hop and social change in Africa: ni wakati. Lanham, Maryland; Boulder; New York; London: Lexington Books,

Collins, E. J. (2005). The decolonization of Ghanaian popular entertainment. Urbanization and African cultures, 119-137..

_____. (2003). Ghanaian women enter into popular entertainment. Humanities Review Journal, 3(1), 1-10.

_____. Ghanaian Christianity and popular entertainment: Full circle. History in Africa, 31, 407-423.

_____.. (2005). A social history of Ghanaian popular entertainment since independence. Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, 17-40.

_____. (2007). Popular Performance and Culture in Ghana. Ghana Studies, 10, 9-64.

_____. (2010). Highlife and Nkrumah's Independence Ethos.

_____. (2012). Contemporary Ghanaian Popular Music since the 1980s. Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World, 211-33.

_____. (2017). Popular Performance and Culture in Ghana: The Past 50 Years. Ghana Studies, 20(1), 175-219.

Collins, P. H. (2000). Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. New York, NY: Routledge.

Conrad, K., Dixon, T. L., & Zhang, Y. (2009). Controversial rap themes, gender portrayals and skin tone distortion: A content analysis of rap music videos. Journal of broadcasting & electronic media, 53(1), 134-156.

Craig, M. L. (2006). Race, beauty, and the tangled knot of a guilty pleasure. Feminist Theory, 7(2), 159-177.

Cremona, V. A. (Ed.). (2004). Theatrical events: Borders, dynamics, frames (Vol. 1). Rodopi.

Cruse, H. (1968). Rebellion or revolution?. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press.

Dako, K. (2013). "The Culture of Sexist Language among Male University Students in Ghana." World Journal of English Language 3.4. p19.

Dankwa, S. O. (2009). “It's a silent trade”: Female same-sex intimacies in post-colonial Ghana. NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 17(3), 192-205.

Diawara, M. (2009). In search of Africa. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Dokotum, O. O. (2016). Schizophrenic Aesthetics in Music Videos about the LRA Atrocities in Northern Uganda. African Studies, 75(2), 215-232.

Dussel, E. (1993). Eurocentrism and modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures). boundary 2, 20(3), 65-76.

Dyer, R. (1997). White: Essays on race and culture. New York, NY: Routledge.

_____. (2002). Only entertainment . London, UK: Psychology Press.

Dyer, R., & McDonald, P. (1998). Stars. London, UK: British Film Institute.

Edmond, M. (2014). Here we go again: Music videos after YouTube. Television & New Media, 15(4), 305-320.

Ekdale, B. (2017). Global frictions and the production of locality in Kenya's music video industry. Media, Culture & Society, 0163443717707340.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). Writing ethnographic fieldnotes. University of Chicago Press.

Escobar, A. (1995). Imagining a post-development era. Power of development, 211-227.

_____. (2004). Beyond the Third World: imperial globality, global coloniality and anti-globalisation social movements. Third World Quarterly, 25(1), 207-230.

_____. (2007). Worlds and knowledges otherwise 1: The Latin American modernity/coloniality research program. Cultural studies, 21(2-3), 179-210.

_____. (2011). Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World. Princeton University Press.

Esteva, G. (2012). Development. In Sachs, W. (1997). Development Dictionary, The: A Guide to Knowledge as Power (2nd). Zed Books

Fanon, F. (2007). The wretched of the earth. New York, NY: Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

Ferguson, J. (1990). The anti-politics machine: 'development', depoliticization and bureaucratic power in Lesotho. CUP Archive.

_____. (2006). Global shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order. Duke University Press.

Finch, J. (2008). Naming names: Kinship, individuality and personal names. Sociology, 42(4), 709-725.

Finnegan, R. (1989). The hidden musicians: Music-making in an English town. Middletown, CT: Cambridge University Press.

Fitts, M. (2008). " Drop It Like It's Hot": Culture Industry Laborers and Their Perspectives on Rap Music Video Production. Meridians, 211-235.

Fokuo, K. J. (2009). "The lighter side of marriage: Skin bleaching in post-colonial Ghana." African and Asian Studies 8.1, 125-146.

Frisby, C. M., & Aubrey, J. S. (2012). Race and genre in the use of sexual objectification in female artists' music videos. Howard Journal of Communications, 23(1), 66-87.

Frith, S. (1996). Music and identity. In Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. (Eds.) Questions of cultural identity. (pp. 108-27). London, U.K: Sage Publications Ltd.

Frost, S. B. (1964). Judgment on Jezebel, or A woman wronged. Theology Today, 20(4), 503-517.

Gadzekpo, A. (2009) "Missing links: African media studies and feminist concerns." Journal of African media studies 1.1, 69-80.

Gaztambide-Fernández, R. "Decolonial options and artistic/aestheSic entanglements: An interview with Walter Mignolo." Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 3, no. 1 (2014).

Gershon, I. (2016). “I’m not a businessman, I’ma business, man” Typing the neoliberal self into a branded existence. HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 6(3), 223-246.

Geschiere, P., Meyer, B., & Pels, P. (2008). Readings in modernity in Africa. London: International African Institute, in association with Indiana UP.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006). A postcapitalist politics. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota Press.

_____. (2008). Diverse economies: performative practices for other worlds. Progress in Human Geography, 32(5), 613-632.

Gilman, S. L. (1985). Black bodies, white bodies: Toward an iconography of female sexuality in late nineteenth-century art, medicine, and literature. Critical Inquiry, 12(1), 204-242.

Gilroy, P. (2010). Darker than blue: On the moral economies of black Atlantic culture. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goodwin, A. (1992). Dancing in the distraction factory: Music television and popular culture. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Gordon, L. R. (2018). Black Aesthetics, Black Value. Public Culture, 30(1), 19-34.

Gow, J. (1996). Reconsidering gender roles on MTV: Depictions in the most popular music videos of the early 1990s. Communication Reports, 9(2), 151-161.

Greenhalgh, C. (2010). Cinematography and camera crew: practice, process and procedure. Theorising Media and Practice, 4, 303.

Grossberg, L. (1992). We gotta get out of this place: Popular conservatism and postmodern culture. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1988). The hard road to renewal: Thatcherism and the crisis of the left. London, U.K. : Verso.

_____. (1986). Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. Journal of communication inquiry, 10(2), 5-27.

_____. (1985). Signification, representation, ideology: Althusser and the post-structuralist debates. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 2(2), 91-114.

_____. (1990) 'Cultural identity and diaspora'. In J. Rutherford (ed.), Identity, London: Lawrence & Wishart.

_____. (1993). What is this" black" in black popular culture?. Social Justice, 20(1/2 (51-52), 104-114.

_____. (1998). Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'. In Storey (ed), Cultural theory and popular culture: A reader, (pp. 442-453). Athens, Ga : The University of Georgia Press

Hall, S. (2003). The White of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media. In Dines, G., & Humez, J. M. Gender, race, and class in media: A text-reader. Sage.

Hansen, K.T. (2004). Dressing Dangerously: Miniskirts, Gender Relations, and Sexuality in Zambia in Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress, edited by Jean Allman, Indiana University Press, 2004.

Hardt, M. (1999). Affective labor. Boundary 2, 89-100.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire. Penguin.

Hart, J. (2016). Ghana on the go: African mobility in the age of motor transportation. Bloomington, In: Indiana University Press.

Harvey, D. (2005). A brief history of neoliberalism. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hauptfleisch, T. (2004). Eventification: Utilizing the theatrical system to frame the event. Cremona, Eversmann, Van Maanen, Sauter & Tulloch (eds.) Theatrical events. Borders–dynamics–frames. New York: Amsterdam, 279-302.

Hauptfleisch, T. (2016). Eventification: framing the Ordinary as the Extraordinary. In Approaches and Methods in Event Studies (pp. 54-70). Routledge.

Havens, T., Lotz, A. D., & Tinic, S. (2009). Critical media industry studies: A research approach. Communication, Culture & Critique, 2(2), 234-253.

Haynes, J. M. (2007). Video Boom: Nigeria and Ghana. Postcolonial Text, 3(2).

Hearn, A. (2008). Meat, Mask, Burden Probing the contours of the branded self. Journal of consumer culture, 8(2), 197-217.

_____. (2011). Confessions of a Radical Eclectic Reality Television, Self-Branding, Social Media, and Autonomist Marxism. Journal of Communication Inquiry, 35(4), 313-321.

_____. (2010). Reality Television, The Hills and the Limits of the Immaterial Labour Thesis. tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society, 8(1), 60-76.

Hearn, A., & Schoenhoff, S. (2016). From celebrity to influencer. In Marshall, P. D., & Redmond, S. (Eds.), A companion to celebrity (pp. 194-212).. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell. Wiley: London.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2006). Bourdieu, the media and cultural production. Media, culture & society, 28(2), 211-231.

_____. (2007). The cultural industries. Sage.

Hickel, J. (2014). The 'girl effect': liberalism, empowerment and the contradictions of development. Third World Quarterly, 35(8), 1355-1373.

_____. (2017). The Development Delusion: Foreign Aid and Inequality. American Affairs, 1(3).

_____. (2017). The Divide: Global Inequality from Conquest to Free Markets. New York, NY: WW Norton & Company.

Honwana, A. (2014, April). Waithood, Restricted Futures and Youth Protests in Africa. In Presentation at Symposium on Youth Research and Development (Vol. 10).

_____. (2015). Enough is enough! »: Youth Protests and Political Change in Africa. Kadya Tall, E., Pommerolle, M.. -E. et Cahen, M., Collective mobilisations in Africa: enough is enough, 45-46.

Hooks, B. (1989). Choosing the margin as space of radical openness. Framework, (36), 15.

_____. (1992). Black looks: Race and representation (p. 28). South East Press, Bosta, MM.

Hungwe, C. (2006). Putting them in their place: "respectable" and "unrespectable" women in Zimbabwean gender struggles. Feminist Africa 6: Subaltern Sexualities, 6, 33-47.

Hunter, M. L. (2013) Race Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hunter, M., & Soto, K. (2009). Women of Color in Hip Hop: The Pornographic Gaze. Race, Gender & Class, 170-191.

Jabbaar-Gyambrah, T. A. (2008). Triple M, Representin, 'Reconstructin' and Resistin': Ideologies of Gender and Sexuality in Hip-Life Music in Ghana. Journal of Race & Policy, 4(1).

Jhally, S. (2007). Dreamworlds 3.

Johnson, A. (2014). Confessions of a video vixen: My autocritography of sexuality, desire, and memory. Text and Performance Quarterly, 34(2), 182-200.

Jones, K. (1997). Are rap videos more violent? Style differences and the prevalence of sex and violence in the age of MTV. Howard Journal of Communications, 8(4), 343-356.

Jones, S. (2005). MTV: The medium was the message. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 22(1), 83-88.

Keyes, C. (2004). Empowering self, making choices, creating spaces: Black female identity via rap music performance. In Anthony Neal (Ed.), That's the joint!: the hip-hop studies reader. (pp.265-264) Psychology Press.

Kidula, J. N. (2011). Gospel music videos in the counter-memory of post-nation identity in Kenya. African Music, 9(1), 116-135.

Konadu-Agyemang, K. (2000). The best of times and the worst of times: structural adjustment programs and uneven development in Africa: the case of Ghana. The Professional Geographer, 52(3), 469-483.

Korsgaard, M. B. (2017). Music Video After MTV: Audiovisual Studies, New Media, and Popular Music. Routledge.

Kothari, U. (2005). From colonial administration to development studies: a post-colonial critique of the history of development studies. A radical history of development studies: Individuals, institutions and ideologies, 47-66.

Kwansah-Aidoo, K., & Owusu, J. O. (2012). Challenging the Status Quo: A Feminist Reading of Shirley Frimpong-Manso's Life and Living It. Feminist Africa, 16, 53-70. Leath, J. S. (2013). Revising Jezebel politics: Toward a new Black sexual ethic. Black Intersectionalities: A Critique for 21st Century, 1, 195.

Lewis, J. (1991). The ideological octopus: An exploration of television and its audience. London, U.K.: Routledge.

Lie, J. H. S. (2015). Developmentality: indirect governance in the World Bank–Uganda partnership. Third World Quarterly, 36(4), 723-740.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2010). Qualitative communication research methods. London, U.K.: Sage.

Lugones, M. (2007). Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system. Hypatia, 22(1), 186-219.

Lutwama-Rukundo, E. (2016) Skimpy Fashion and Sexuality in Sheebah Karungi's Performances. Feminist Africa 21. 52-62

Makki, F. (2004). The empire of capital and the remaking of centre–periphery relations. Third World Quarterly, 25(1), 149-168.

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007). On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept 1. Cultural studies, 21(2-3), 240-270.

Mawuko-Yevugah, L. C. (2010). Governing through developmentality: The politics of international aid reform and the (re) production of power, neoliberalism and neocolonial interventions in Ghana. University of Alberta.

Mbembe, A. (2008) The New Africans. In Geschiere, P., Meyer, B., & Pels, P. (eds), Readings in Modernity in Africa. London: International African Institute, in association with Indiana UP.

McFadden, P. (2003) Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice. Feminist Africa, 2, Available at: http://www.feministafrica.org/index.php/sexual-pleasure-as-feminist-choice [Accessed on 11/24/2015]

McKittrick, K. (Ed.). (2014). Sylvia Wynter: On being human as praxis. Duke University Press.

McRobbie, A. (2016). Be creative: Making a living in the new culture industries. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Mercer, K. (2000). Black hair/style politics. Black British culture and society: A text reader, 111-121.

Michel Rolph Trouillot (2002). North Atlantic Universals: Analytical Fictions, 1492-1945. The South Atlantic Quarterly, 101, No. 4 pp 839-858.

Miescher, S. F. (2005). The Challenges of Presbyterian Masculinity in Colonial Ghana. Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, (9), 75-101.

Mignolo, W. (2011). Epistemic disobedience and the decolonial option: A manifesto. Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, 1(2).

_____. (2013). Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: On (de) coloniality, border thinking, and epistemic disobedience. Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics, 1(1), 129-150.

_____. (2007). DELINKING: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality 1. Cultural studies, 21(2-3), 449-514.

Mignolo, W., & Vázquez, R. (2013). Decolonial aestheSis: Colonial wounds/decolonial healings. Social Text, 15, 2013.

Mohanty, C. T. (2005). Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity. Zubaan.

Moore, D. S. (1999). the crucible of cultural politics: reworking" development" in Zimbabwe's eastern highlands. American Ethnologist, 26(3), 654-689.

Mosco, V. (1996). The political economy of communication: Rethinking and renewal (Vol. 13). Sage.

Mougoué, J. B. (2016). African Women Do Not Look Good in Wigs: Gender, Beauty Rituals and Cultural Identity in Anglophone Cameroon, 1961-1972. Feminist Africa 21.7-22

Moyo, T. (2012). Naming practices in colonial and post-colonial Malawi. Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 4(1), 10-16.

Murphy, D. (2000). Africans filming Africa: Questioning theories of an authentic African cinema. Journal of African Cultural Studies, 13(2), 239-249.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013). Empire, global coloniality and African subjectivity. Berghahn Books.

Neal, M. A. (2013). Looking for Leroy: illegible black masculinities. NYU Press.

Newell, S., & Okome, O. (2013). Popular culture in Africa: the episteme of the everyday (Vol. 58). New York, NY: Routledge.

Obeng-Odoom, F. (2012). Neoliberalism and the urban economy in Ghana: Urban employment, inequality, and poverty. Growth and Change, 43(1), 85-109.

Odamtten, H. N. K. (2013). Morality, the Sacred, and God in Ghanaian Hip Hop. Urban God Talk: Constructing a Hip Hop Spirituality, 189-205.

Odotei, I. (1989). What is in a name? The social and historical significance of Ga names. Research Review, 5(2), 34-51.

Oduro-Frimpong, J. (2009). Glocalization trends: The case of hiplife music in contemporary Ghana. International journal of Communication, 3, 22.

Omoniyi, T. (2006). Hip-hop through the world Englishes lens: a response to globalization. World Englishes, 25(2), 195-208.

Osumare, H. (2012). The hiplife in Ghana: West African indigenization of hip-hop. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

_____. (2014). Becoming a "Society of the Spectacle": Ghanaian Hiplife Music and Corporate Recolonization. Popular Music and Society, 37(2), 187-209.

Ove, P. (2013). Governmentality and the Analytics of Development. Perspectives on Global Development and Technology, 12(1-2), 310-331.

Owu-Ewie, C. (2017). Language, Education and Linguistic Human Rights in Ghana. Legon Journal of the Humanities, 28(2), 151-172.

Pernecky, T. (Ed.). (2016). Approaches and methods in event studies. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pennycook, A. (2007). Language, localization, and the real: Hip-hop and the global spread of authenticity. Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 6(2), 101-115.

Perry, I. (2004). Prophets of the hood: Politics and poetics in hip hop. Duke University Press.

Pierre, J. (2012). The predicament of blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the politics of race. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Pieterse, J. N. (2000). After post-development. Third world quarterly, 21(2), 175-191.

Pilcher, J. (2016). Names, bodies and identities. Sociology, 50(4), 764-779

Prodnik, J. (2012). A note on the ongoing processes of commodification: from the audience commodity to the social factory. tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society, 10(2), 274-301

Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. International Sociology, 15(2), 215-232.

_____. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. Cultural studies, 21(2-3), 168-178.

Radano, R., & Olaniyan, T. (Eds.). (2016). Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique. Duke University Press.

Rahnema, M., & Bawtree, V. (1997). The post-development reader. Zed Books.

Read, J. (2009). A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and The Production of Subjectivity. A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium, 2.

Real, T. (1998). I don't want to talk about it: Overcoming the secret legacy of male depression. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Walter, R. (1972). How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. London: Bogle-L'ouverture Publications.

Rodriguez, G. B. (2016). Writing Names, Reading Hip Hop: Children (re) Mixing and (re) Making Language, Literacy, and Learning Through the Hip Hop Cultural Naming Practices and Pedagogies of StyleWriting (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles).

Rose, N. (1999). Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought. Cambridge, UK : Cambridge university Press.

Rose, T. (1994). Black noise: Rap music and black culture in contemporary America. Wesleyan University Press.

_____. (2008). The hip hop wars: What we talk about when we talk about hip hop--and why it matters. New York, NY: Civitas Books.

Roth, L. (2009). Looking at Shirley, the ultimate norm: Colour balance, image technologies, and cognitive equity. Canadian Journal of Communication, 34(1).

Sachs, W. (1997). Development Dictionary, The: A Guide to Knowledge as Power. Zed Books.

Sandoval, C. (2003). US Third World Feminisms. In Lewis, R., & Mills, S. (eds). Feminist postcolonial theory: A reader (pp. 75-102). New York, NY: Routledge:

Sarkodie. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.ghanacelebrities.com/sarkodie/

Sauter, W. (2004). Introducing the theatrical event. Cremona, Eversmann, Van Maanen, Sauter & Tulloch (reds.) Theatrical events. Borders–dynamics–frames. New York: Amsterdam, 1, 3.

Schneider, M. (2007). The nature, history and significance of the concept of positional goods. History of Economics Review, 45(1), 60-81.

Scott, D. (1995). Colonial governmentality. Social text, (43), 191-220.

Shani, H. (2004). The theatrical event: from coordination to dynamic interactivity. Cremona, Eversmann, Van Maanen, Sauter & Tulloch (reds.) Theatrical events. Borders–dynamics–frames. New York: Amsterdam,, 111.

Shingler, M. (2012). Star studies: a critical guide. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shipley, J. W. (2009). Aesthetic of the entrepreneur: Afro-cosmopolitan rap and moral circulation in Accra, Ghana. Anthropological Quarterly, 82(3), 631-668.

_____. (2012). Living the hiplife: celebrity and entrepreneurship in Ghanaian popular music. Duke University Press.

Simpson, A. (Ed.). (2008). Language and national identity in Africa. Oxford University Press.

Singerman, D. (2007). The economic imperatives of marriage: Emerging practices and identities among youth in the Middle East.

Slobodian, Q. (2018). Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Smyth, R. (2014). Film as Instrument of Modernization and Social Change in Africa: The Long View. Modernization as spectacle in Africa, 65-88. Indiana University Press.

Tamale, S. (2016). 'Keep Your Eyes off My Thighs': A Feminist Analysis of Uganda's 'Miniskirt Law'. Feminist Africa 21. 83-90

Tandon, Y. (2015). Development is resistance. Africa Development, 40(3), 139-159.

Tanye, M. (2008). Access and barriers to education for Ghanaian women and girls. Interchange, 39(2), 167-184.

Taylor, C. (1992). The ethics of authenticity. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, P. C. (2016). Black is beautiful: a philosophy of black aesthetics (Vol. 6). West Sussex, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons.

Thompson, K. D. (2008). Keeping it real: reality and representation in Maasai Hip-Hop. Journal of African Cultural Studies, 20(1), 33-44.

Thompson, D. (2012). Cosmopolitanism Sits in Places: Consumption and Cosmopolitics in Latin America. International Review of Social Research, 2(3), 59-77.

Trouillot, M. R. (2002). The otherwise modern. Critically Modern: alternatives, alterities, anthropologies, 220-237.

Turner, J. S. (2011). Sex and the spectacle of music videos: An examination of the portrayal of race and sexuality in music videos. Sex Roles, 64(3-4), 173-191.

Veblen, T. (2000) Conspicuous Consumption. In Schor, J., and Douglas B. H. (eds) The consumer society reader (pp. 187-204). New York, NY: The New Press,

Vernallis, C. (2004). Experiencing music video: Aesthetics and cultural context. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

_____. (2013). Unruly media: YouTube, music video, and the new digital cinema. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Wa Mungai, M. (2008). ‘Made in Riverwood’:(dis) locating identities and power through Kenyan pop music. Journal of African Cultural Studies, 20(1), 57-70.

Wa Thiong'o, N. (1994). Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature. Nairobi, Kenya: East African Publishers.

_____. (2009). Something torn and new: An African renaissance. New York, NY: Civitas Books.

Walsh, C. (2007). Shifting the geopolitics of critical knowledge: Decolonial thought and cultural studies ‘others’ in the Andes. Cultural studies, 21(2-3), 224-239.

Waterman, C. (2002). Big Man, Black President, Masked One Models of the Celebrity Self in Yoruba Popular Music in Nigeria in Palmberg, M., & Kirkegaard, A. Playing with identities in contemporary music in Africa. Nordic Africa Institute.

Willis, P. (2007). The ethnographic imagination. Cambridge, UK “ Polity Press.

Wynter, S. (2003). Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation--An argument. CR: The new centennial review, 3(3), 257-337

Videos

[2MG Music Official]. (2018, March 5). Eno Barony - Fear No Man (Official Video). [Video File].Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFieKf4mQXQ

[AYAT Music]. (2016, June 20). Falz - This Is Nigeria (Official Video. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_26FdbpGC2g

[AYAT Music]. (2017, November 1). Kirani AYAT ft M.anifest - KUDI (Official Video. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhnN9-iX38s

[Davido Adeleke]. (2015, June 9). Fans Mi - Davido x Meek Mill (Official Music Video). [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E6pwUO1b7s

[DELAY TV]. (2015, January 29) DELAY INTERVIEWS SARKODIE. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ir-6LjjcSeE&t=40s

[DBlackMuzik]. (2012, September 1). D-Black - VERA ft. Joey B (Official Music Video). [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNiswpSwFBo

[Donald Glover]. (2018, May 5). Childish Gambino - This Is America (Official Video) [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY

[EXCELLENCIA MEDIA HOUSE]. (2013, December 13) DELAY INTERVIEWS NASARA 2013. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUiiPEzFnNc

[FalzVEVO]. (2018, May 25). Falz - This Is Nigeria (Official Video)[Video File].Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UW_xEqCWrm0

[Gasmilla AzontoKing]. (2015, August 6). GASMILLA - FALE FT ALLSTARS (OFFICIAL VIDEO). [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTCnDbBNR1Q

[Guru NKZ] (2014, July 16). Guru - Pooley. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UPYjg6bQAU

[Nayoka Oware]. (2016, March 20). The FULL INTERVIEW: The Journey Exclusive with Sarkodie. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jT3U6V-gWlA

[OfficialSarkodie]. (2013, August 19). Sarkodie – Illuminati (Official Video). [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLTnt_-Mr3U

[OfficialSarkodie]. (2015, June 14). Sarkodie - New Guy ft. Ace Hood (Official Video). [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4MpyQub5Xc.

[OfficialSarkodie]. (2015, October 23). Sarkodie - Interview at France 24. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUABmW3nzG8.

[OfficialSarkodie]. (2015, November 13). Breaking Boarders: Hot 97 interview with Sarkodie. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvmcYtc8MNE.

[OfficialSarkodie]. (2016, December 11). Sarkodie - Trumpet ft. TeePhlow, Medikal, Strongman, Koo Ntakra, Donzy & Pappy Kojo (Official Video). [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKJqIOH9aFk

[THE KSM SHOW]. (2015, June 14). KSM Show- Sarkodie Hanging out with KSM. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhVgm33J9MU.

[TimWestwoodTV]. (2016, March 8). Sarkodie on Afrobeats going worldwide, A Man's World, new music, live show. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Reemt39oHk

[UNICEF GHANA]. (2015, June 23). Wash Wana Hands. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGjkZPyiD3g

[Wanlov the Kubolor]. (2008, July 18). Wanlov The Kubolor - Kokonsa. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnRvsvLlrZA

[Wanlov the Kubolor]. (2017, March 25). Wanlov the Kubolor - My Toto. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4qxvovzFKY

[Wanlov the Kubolor]. (2012, January 17). For the River ft Long John. [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzVVBumJuMQ